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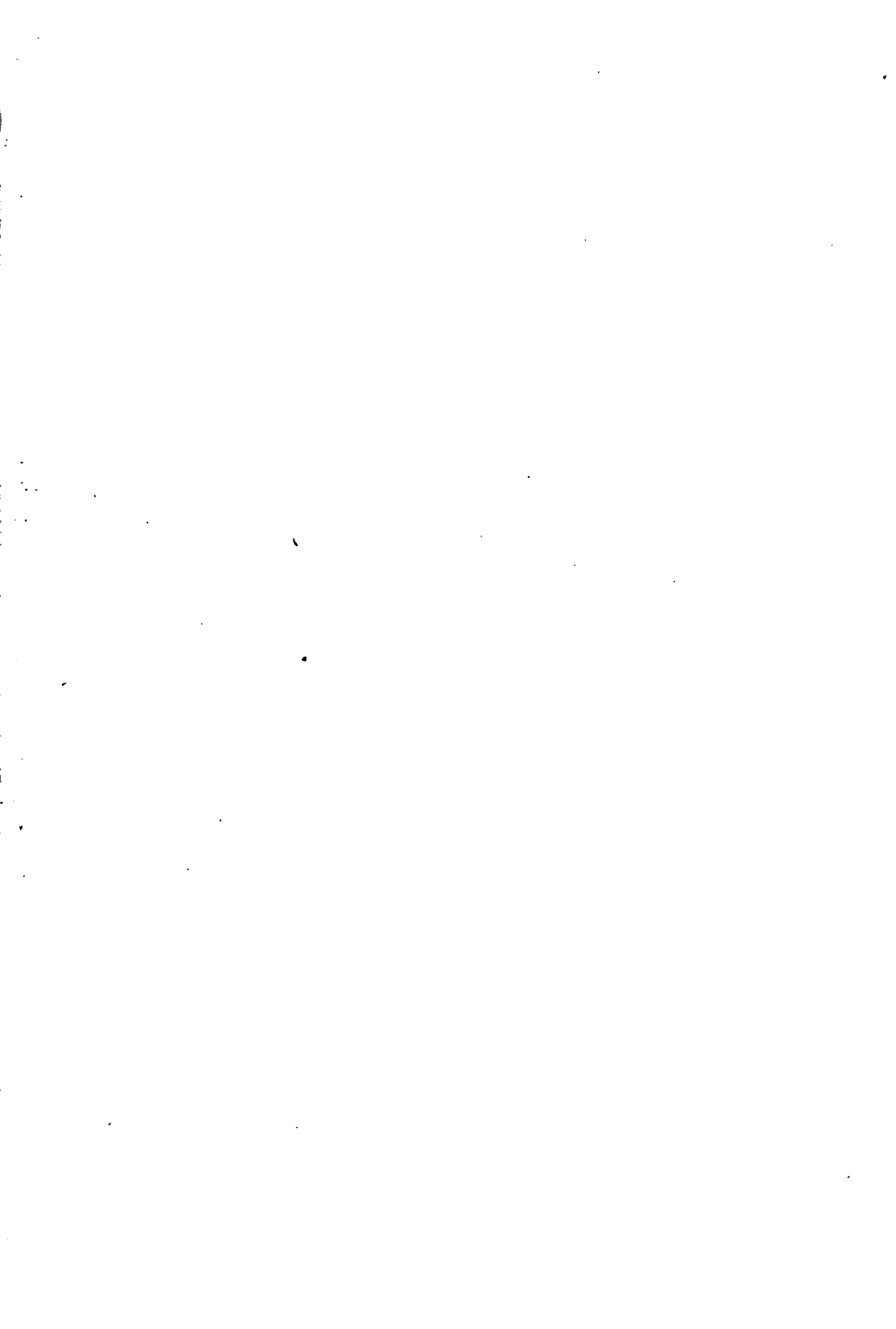


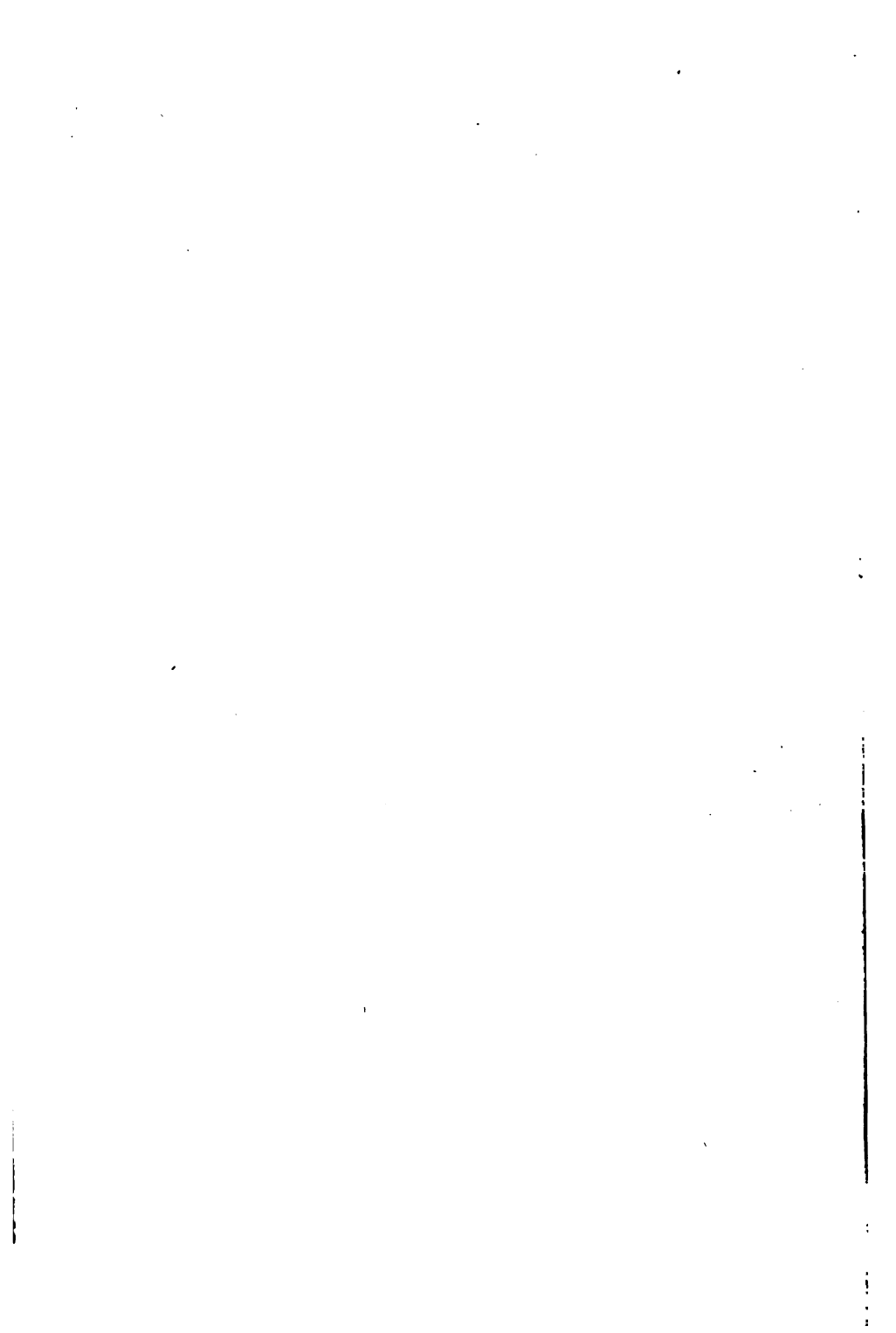
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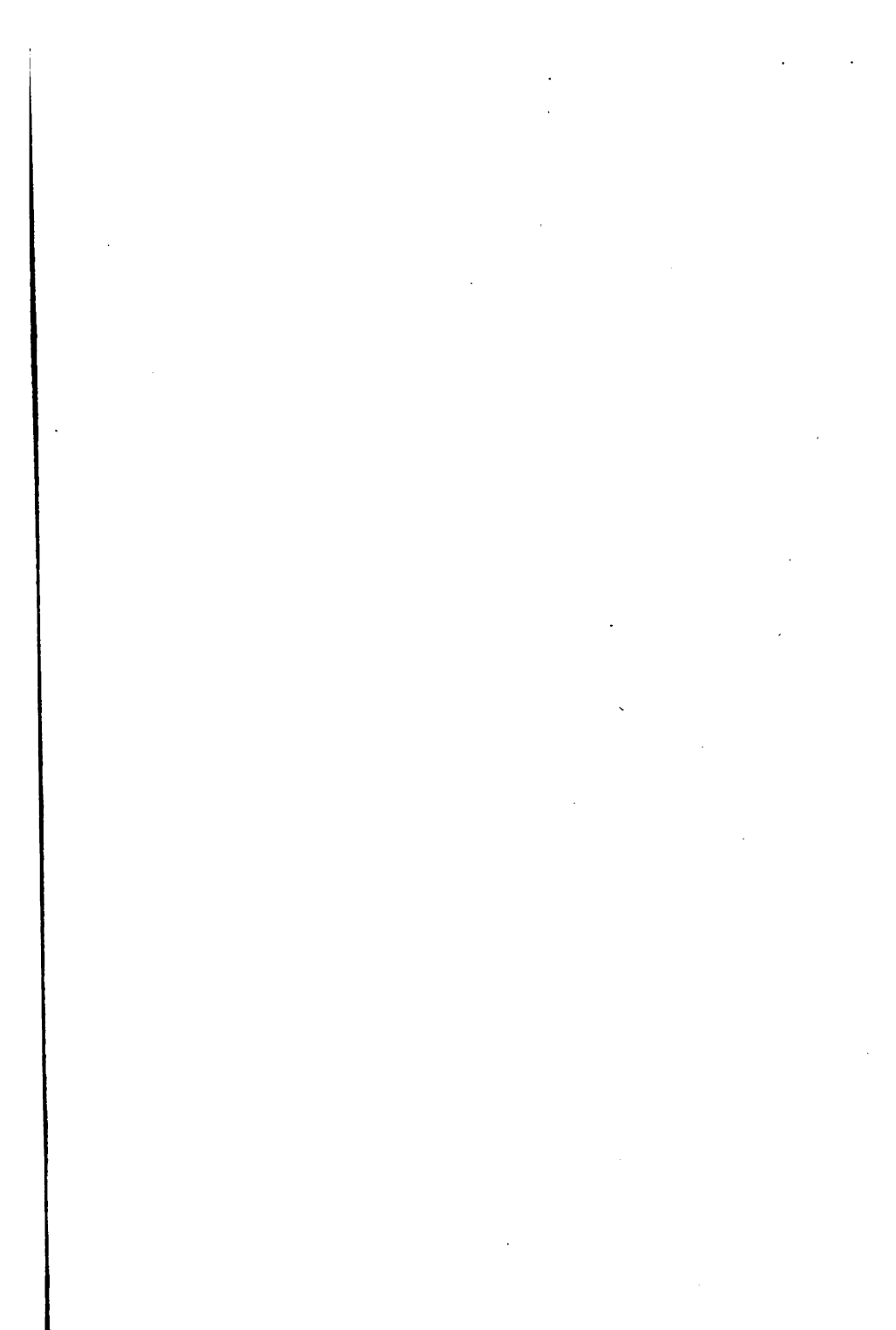
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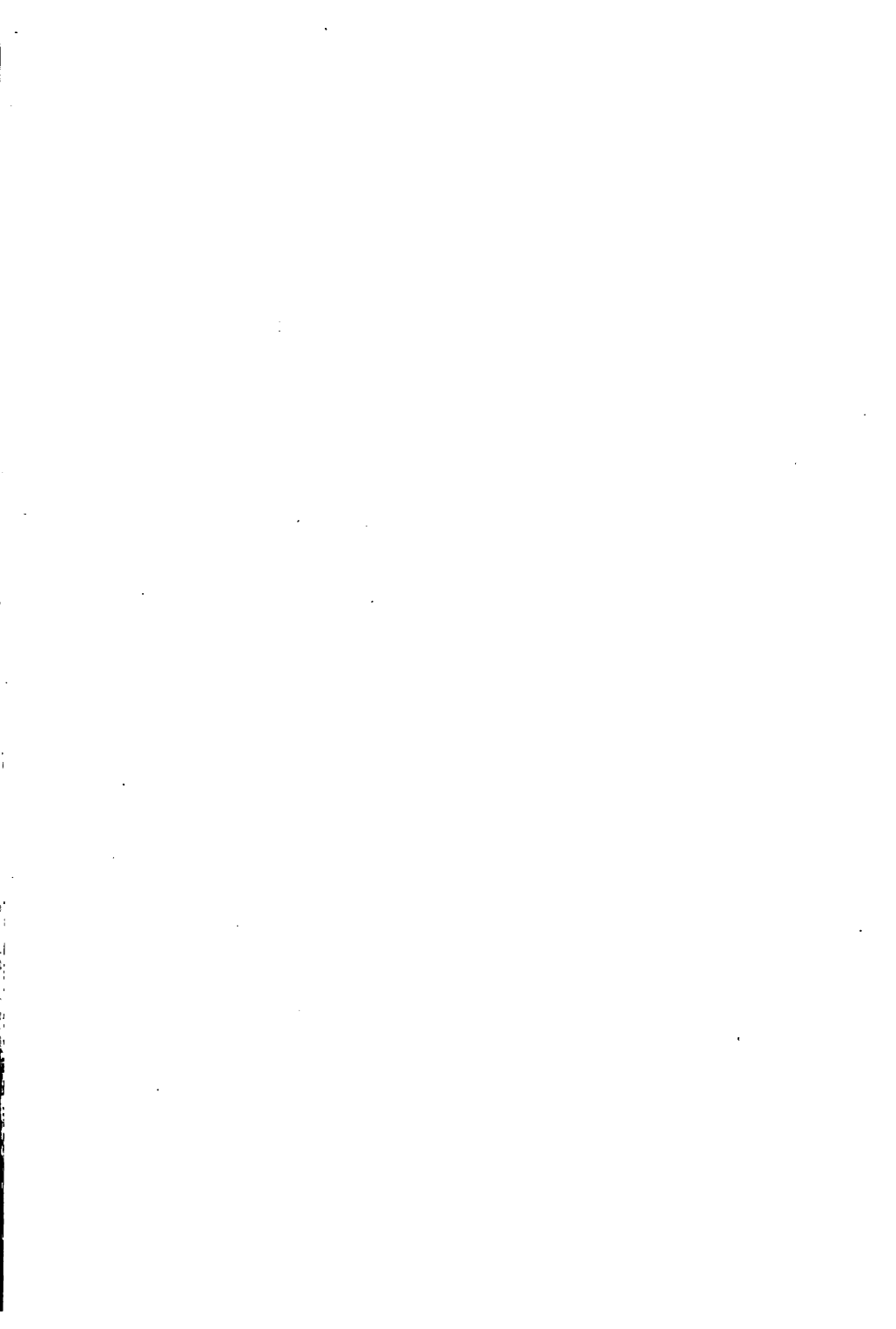
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THE GLORY THAT WAS SPAIN

# THE LAND BEYOND MEXICO

BY  
RHYS CARPENTER



 BOSTON  
RICHARD G. BADGER  
THE GORHAM PRESS

SA 3869.20

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*Latin-American  
Professorship fund*

Made in the United States of America

The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

ΣΟΙ ΠΟΤΚΕΡΔΕΣ ΟΡΕΤ ΒΙΒΑΙΟΝ ΜΝΗΜΕΙΑ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΑ  
ΠΟΙΝΑΣ ΩΝ ΕΠΑΘΟΝ ΤΙΝΤΜΕΝΟΣ ΣΕ ΕΠΕΖΙΝ

*This book, thou crafty mule, to thee  
I dedicate in memory,  
For penalty of every wrong  
Avenging me on thee with song.*



## FOREWORD

This book is the record of a mule-back journey of nearly a thousand miles undertaken by an American archaeologist who wished to familiarize himself with some of the old Maya ruins of Central America.

It aims at giving a picture of the land and people of Guatemala, San Salvador, and the northern border of Honduras, as they are known only to those who are content to sleep in the Indian villages and ride the lonely upland trails of one of the loveliest and least known countries of the New World.



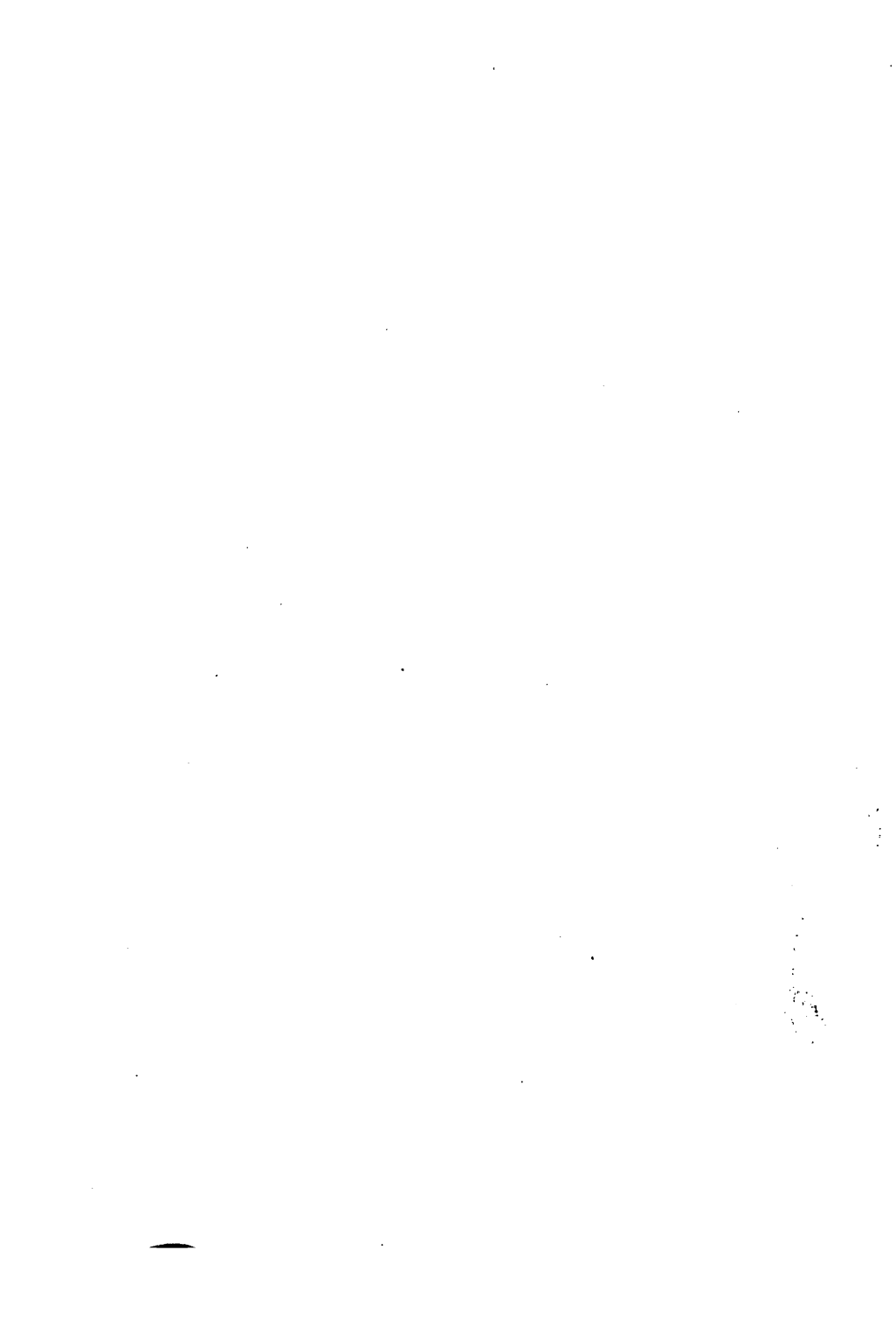
## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                          | PAGE |
|----------------------------------|------|
| I. IN THE HIGHLANDS . . . . .    | 13   |
| II. MIRAGE OF QUICHE . . . . .   | 47   |
| III. ANTIGUA . . . . .           | 72   |
| IV. RIDING TO SALVADOR . . . . . | 97   |
| V. DON QUIXOTE'S RANCH . . . . . | 124  |
| VI. THE LOWLANDS . . . . .       | 153  |



## ILLUSTRATIONS

|                                       |                     |                |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| ✓THE GLORY THAT WAS SPAIN             | <i>Frontispiece</i> |                |
|                                       |                     | FACING<br>PAGE |
| ✓SURVIVORS OF EARTHQUAKE . . . . .    |                     | 34             |
| ✓HIGH STREET. ANTIGUA . . . . .       |                     | 50             |
| ✓ROAD AND RUIN. ANTIGUA . . . . .     |                     | 60             |
| ✓FEAST OF THE VIRGIN. GUATEMALA CITY  |                     | 90             |
| ✓"IDOLS" OF COPAN. HONDURAS . . . . . |                     | 114            |
| ✓THE THICKET. QUIRIGUA . . . . .      |                     | 126            |



## **THE LAND BEYOND MEXICO**



# THE LAND BEYOND MEXICO

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE HIGHLANDS

To what lengths do we go for our amusement, we, the spoiled children of our age! I have found me a table and made me a bench, and I am seated out-of-doors under a sloping roof. All that I can see is a courtyard, full of chickens and ducks and rain. The hens, devoid of maritime inclinations, are pecking about forlornly under what shelter they can find, while their sea-going cousins, indifferent to the flood, drift about happily on the lake that was a courtyard. Beyond is a wall whose dirty stucco, scaling away, has made patent to every passer-by that adobe is mud in spite of all pretences. Above it, the more distant ridge of a thatched roof vanishes into the grey of the driving rain. That is all that meets my eye, except an Indian boy or two, moving about the house. Most of the Indians are asleep, curled on rugs and blankets, though it is not yet three in the

afternoon. Two others, manifestly against their will, subject to the *force majeure* of the woman of the house, have gone to find fodder for my mule. Feeding Colorada, I can already see, will be the cross and trial of the days to come. But what is bad for my temper is good for my Spanish: meanwhile it rains.

I am inclined to think that these haunts are to be found in nearly every atlas. The poorest bit of cartography will show you that the first country south of Mexico is Guatemala, that it stretches from ocean to ocean without managing to attain any considerable area, and that it has a range of mountains running through it, out of Mexico and into Salvador, a sacral vertebra in the great North American spine. In the undulating tableland in the center of those volcanic hills, a hundred miles below Mexico, a hundred miles above Salvador, there is a little sloping town called Patzizia. In one of the topmost streets is a house a little larger than its neighbours, with a courtyard and a stall. In the stall is a munching mule recently renamed Colorada, and in the courtyard under a sloping roof is an American traveller who is writing and watching the rain.

A glance indoors at the mattress has just convinced him that he will not be undressing for bed to-night. Meanwhile it rains, and it will still be

indulging in that heavenly and beneficent occupation for the five hours of daylight that yet remain. There is neither event nor change. The inn-keeper's daughter is rather good-looking, but her legs are too thick and her nose is a trifle short; out in the dreary deluge, unfed and unpitied, there is tied a decrepit old horse with a sore on either shoulder; the household wash is flying in the wind in a preposterous attempt to dry itself, though Deukalion and Gilgamesh never beheld anything more torrential; an attractive, but sodden, little pig has just taken refuge in my bedroom, and I am debating whether it is Christian to turn him out into the wet. . . . Oh, we spoiled children of our age! I have come three thousand miles for this; and I half believe that I enjoy it.

The head of the household is an old, old woman (*ætate sua XLV*) who does all her arithmetic with kernels of dried corn. There is, it seems, something unprognosticable in the addition of six and five which only empiric observation can determine. But it is folly to deride her methods, for I suspect her to be the richest woman in the village and, to judge by the wrinkled cunning of her eyes, the shrewdest. There are three generations under her roof, and unless her strong-ankled grand-daughter is as haughty as she is pretty,

future travellers will find four. She was attentive to my wants and comfort, at which I should have been surprised had I known the country better. I was soon to learn that Guatemala is oblivious to the stranger within her gates, that she greets him with indifference, tends him with indolence, and speeds him in indigence. I do not mean that he is robbed or cheated on his departure. On the contrary, he cannot get rid of his money, since it buys him nothing. The people are not hostile, but inactive; incurious, rather than unfriendly; and negligent because they are unimaginative and because they work only when they must. Travelling is cheap and uncomfortable. Distances are long and food is meagre. But I was well-fed that afternoon in Patzizia and went to bed at an early hour. The pig had upheld his right of entry; but soon my sleepy senses heard neither him nor the rain, and when I woke at dawn, both had vanished.

\* \* \* \* \*

I set out early on my northward road, where among pines and corn-fields and green slopes of grass I almost found again our own Atlantic states. Some glimpse, some turn, some folding of the hills had an easy and pleasant familiarity, only to lose its homely appeal a hundred yards further up the road, where agave and a burst of un-

northern flowers marked the invasion of the low-land flora from the hot and luxuriant coast beyond the mountain-wall.

The road from Patzizia leads between green hedges through a garden-land where the corn grows high and weeds are unbelievably fertile. Less than fifteen degrees north of the Equator and more than six thousand feet above the sea, this upland of volcanic soil is a compromise between a tropic latitude and a temperate altitude. There is a northern character to the scenery, yet the greens are harder and cruder, and the light has none of the richness and shadow-play of Berkshire lawns or New Hampshire woods. In some strange way it is the Tropics still.

Behind me as I rode were the hills, high wooded slopes with a towering red peak of rock above them, the head of Fire, the great volcano. Before me across the growing plain were other hills less high, but running up into blue forest-ridges that made me impatient of my level road between the hedges.

The Indians passed me in an endless procession of servitude. They were carrying earthen jugs and pots, and managed to string twenty vessels upon a single frame. Bowed under the load which was piled high above their heads, they trotted along, barefooted or sandalled, with the

strange half-running gait which is their characteristic mode of journey. They are no better than beasts of burden. Cheaper than mules, they take the four-foot's place and carry these wares to markets that are two and three days distant. Short of stature, they are tremendously developed in the muscles of their legs and backs, but feeble in their arms, and permanently bent from their unenviable occupation.

The pottery itself is crudely made. Shaped on a wheel, it is symmetrical enough, but without any grace or character. The flame-marks show on every piece, patches of black where the clay has been unevenly baked. Strung on wooden frames, these pots came down the road with a pair of bare brown legs beneath them, a strange sight for the unaccustomed. But I rode into a spectacle much worse; for as I descended to a little stream I had the horrid experience of meeting a rigid human-being, wrapped like a mummy in pink cloth and carried in a wooden frame on an Indian's back. Not until I saw that the protruding naked feet were of wax did I realize that I had stumbled neither on crime nor on funeral ceremony, but that some church was to be enriched with the embodiment of a saint.

We breakfasted at ten in the village of Patzum,

Colorada on a couple of pounds of dried corn, myself on fried eggs and frijoles, tortillas, and coffee. *Tortillas* and *frijoles* will be common words of mine throughout this book. Both are well enough in moderation, but to these two in Guatemala there is no end. Frijoles are black beans, always boiled and sometimes mashed and re-warmed; tortillas are both a food and a ceremony. Dried Indian corn is rubbed on stone to a whitish flour, mixed with water to a dough, moulded and patted to a pancake, baked on an open griddle to an uneven brown, and fed to friend and foe. Fresh and hot they are very good; and when cold they can be restored to the category of food by toasting. In the Maya world frijoles are meat and tortillas are bread. Besides these there is water in the country; but the favourite drink is the colourless brandy which is distilled from crude cane-sugar. If it were deodorized it might sell for pure alcohol. Of this powerful intoxicant there is an unlimited supply and an unmoderated consumption. Having no prejudice against Bacchus, I cannot be considered partisan if I call this the scourge of the Indian race in whose degeneration and gradual extinction it is one of three prime factors. The other two are the changed habits of life and the

diseases brought by the white man. "We died of the blessings of civilisation," will be written on the gravestone of the race.

But I had no such thoughts as I rode away from Patzum. A level road, a green landscape, a sunny blue sky after a day of rain, a willing mule, and an indolent rider,—for once it was the time and the place and the loved things all together. The Indians trotted by without a look or a word of greeting, although when I insisted on the amenities usual to fellow-beings, they seemed much pleased at the distinction between Mayas and mules which my "Good-afternoon" implied.

An hour passed without incident. Twice the path skirted curious earth ravines whose edges dropped away sheer for a good two hundred feet. The flat fertile table-land stretched to the very brink without a warning wrinkle or shudder; beyond the chasm, it resumed its level expanse. I tied Colorado to a bush and peered over an unsafe edge. Far below were the tops of trees and the crowded green of well-watered and well-shadowed growth; but there was neither stream nor outlet to be seen. The ravine yawned like a crevasse in a field of ice without further geologic excuse.

I rode on and was beginning to think Guatemalan journeying dull and disappointing, when

the path suddenly fell into one of these abysses. In the course of a thousand feet of steep descent on washed-out rocky zig-zags, table-land and corn-field disappeared, orchid-covered moss-hung oaks massed to a forest, and cliffs and wooded ridges shut out half the sky. The only apparent master and maker of all this scenery was a diminutive stream that twinkled merrily along on the floor of the ravine. It was like a kitten playing among the overturned tables and broken china of a feast, and it seemed absurd to blame all that havoc upon so small a thing.

Once down at the bottom, the path splashed about in the little stream till it came to a green and lonely farm and there it passed abruptly through a door of rock whose traces of ancient barricading hinted of less peaceful times. Through wrinkled woods higher and higher above the stream the trail bent in and out as it followed the creases of the valley-side; but just as one hoped to reach the rim of the table-land above, it dropped again deeper than ever to a foaming ford. Guatemalan trails are fond of such tricks. They lure the traveller within sight of his goal only to drop him into interminable clefts and sink him into hidden woods to "wail by impassable streams." Yet the solitude and the endless trees, the glimpses of water and distant

heights, the unknown path and the unexpected scenes, make up for these uneven pilgrimages.

The Pass of the Langadha, the finest similar thing in Greece, is beggared by the densely overgrown gorges through which I rode that day. There is no Sparta at the end to make the passage famous; yet I came upon something whose beauty can rival the fragrant orange-blossomed plain of the Eurotas below snow-capped Taygetos. At five in the afternoon, after riding for an hour high up in mountain fog and shower, I came down through a village and out upon the steepest descent of the day. Crawling down step by step on ragged zig-zags in the midst of a down-pour of rain that made a river under Colorado's hoofs and a grey curtain of the air, I had ceased to expect or hope, thinking it was enough to be still on Colorado's back, when in the midst of my wretchedness the rain stopped with characteristic abruptness, the wind blew holes in the mist, and I saw sheer under me, seemingly thousands of feet, a lowland lake with further shores of cliff. It was fog-magic; for I felt as though I were hung in the clouds, and the plain was so bright and so fresh and so clear and the lake was of such a summer-blue that it seemed a vision out of another world and the most beautiful sight that I had ever seen.

Actually it was only a few more hundred feet down to the plain. With the last step, upland changed to lowland and the path slipped into a riot of bamboo, sugar-cane, oranges, limes, and plants whose names are only native words to me. But Jordan had broken into Eden: for the path led demurely into a river whose rain-swollen rapid I could not cross, even though I knew that dinner and bed dwelt beyond the other bank. The downpour began again. With fourteen hundred feet of rock behind me and an unfordable river ahead, a sodden soil beneath me and a falling sky above, I was well encompassed. But an Indian appearing after a little told me of an easier ford and showed me a little jungle-track which I had mistaken for an irrigation-ditch in action. Arrived at the passage, Colorado chose wisely between the two evils of a spurring master and a foaming stream and we were soon in Panajachel in one of the few Guatemalan inns where strangers seem to be really welcome.

\* \* \* \* \*

After dinner I sat out in the grass-grown court of the inn. The rain had passed, and the day's strangeness was already a memory. In the twilight a tree-toad was piping his high-pitched evening song; the fire-flies were lighting their lamps; on the horizon a thunderstorm was ris-

ing, and the distant lightning flared without sound. The air was warm and almost still. It was a northern evening of mid-summer, and I felt that I was back in the New England hills. Yet I knew that on the other side of the wall the Indians were encamped in a Guatemalan village-square, crouching over tiny bonfires at which they were toasting tortillas and brewing coffee, or seated in the shelter of the raised wooden arcade in silent contemplation of their fellows. And beyond the square were the slow-falling ruins of a church built by the vanished Spaniards, and beyond in a crumbled belfry hung bells that were cast long ago in Spain. For all the illusion I was in an Indian village, hemmed in by a language that was not my own; and when the clouds blew from the sky it was not the New England constellations that shone out.

To everyone who has emerged from the sub-savage condition of treating the stars as sprinklings from some vast salt-shaker, unordered and unarrangeable as the sugar-grains we strew on cakes, a voyage into the Tropics holds a new experience. Some of us read the *Odyssey* and, regarding the simple allusions to the stars as literary exotics, miss the true savour of that homely narrative. Others, however, have raised themselves sufficiently near to the status of the early

racers to find something of comradeship in the map of heaven. In Europe and in the Far East they look for the old time-endearred constellations and, seeing them, find something familiar and something of home. But when they travel south across the line of the tropics, there come, night after night, unknown stars higher and higher above the horizon into which they steer. The eternity of space with its everlasting stretches we explain to children for their wonder, without feeling what we speak. To us these are unpalatable common-places. But when the familiar constellations make room for others unknown, there blows over us of a sudden a breath from that other half of the unbounded into which we have never gazed.

In much the same way those who have known the Atlantic all their lives stare like Cortes strangely and with an unexplained exaltation on the Pacific surf when first it breaks before them. But the southern skies are an ocean incomparably vaster and richer. I fear that I have little of ready-made religion; but no pilgrim ever saluted a relic of Golgotha with truer emotion than I the Southern Cross and the shining stars whom I had never seen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next morning I went swimming in the lake, to

the amazement and idolatrous admiration of the native boys who had never seen the simple strokes which I executed so ineffectively. These Indians of Guatemala are poor swimmers, poor horsemen, poor judges of distance and direction, poor cooks, and poor hunters. They are excellent beasts of burden and splendid fanatics; but the marvellous woodcraft and primitive proficiency with which savage races are so popularly endowed should be sought elsewhere than in Guatemala.

As I came ashore I discovered that the "drift-wood" of the sandy beach was a line of pumice and I forthwith indulged a small-boy's idea of pleasure by throwing into the water the largest stones that I could find. They recovered smilingly from the splash, to bob about as serenely as though there were nothing unusual in their behaviour.

I was not surprised to learn that the lake of Atitlan had no bottom, for the burden of proof can be put on the unbeliever; but I was not prepared to hear that it had no outlet. For that is a matter which any pair of eyes might settle to the contrary. And this I determined to do.

A white-haired, round-faced German sea-captain navigates a launch with wheel and compass across the ten-mile deep. Perhaps there are foggy

days to justify this wilful reminiscence of a sea-going life, or it may be that the ritual instils additional respect into the humble native mind.

At the long-drawn blast of a cheap brass horn the waiting Indians solemnly gathered their packs and trooped aboard with a couple of ragged and dirty bills for the waiting captain, whose aged face while he gathered the five-cent fares glowed with a benevolence hitherto confined to the angelic host.

The water was windless, in colour more green than blue. Cliffs and mountain-slopes shut it in, making their ring more marked by their clear reflections. On the furthest shore stood two volcanoes with their heads in cloud. The world seemed silent and sun-flooded. Nature has her own calendar and this was her Sabbath of rest. It is a day which the human calendar in Central America intercalates with an almost diurnal assiduity, but which is only impressive when wind and water proclaim it.

The Indians crouched on the deck, without comment or question among themselves, while the launch puffed over the quiet surface and the cliffs rose higher behind us as the distance increased. Only an Axenstrasse could girdle Atitlan. Even the shaggiest paths have to turn inland, so that

it becomes a long and difficult day's ride to reach the villages to which the launch crosses in a couple of hours.

There was in truth no outlet to the lake. Where it might have been, the volcanoes have pushed up their barriers. Between the cones of Toliman and San Pedro the water has run in, but a lava wall shuts off further progress. Thus a deep bay is formed, on whose steep shore stands Atitlan, the village from which the lake has its name. It is one of the oldest Guatemalan towns and is mentioned in the Spanish chronicles as the home of the Tzutuhiles, a tribe whose name has nowadays more flavour than significance.

Going ashore, I found myself back in my boyhood Africa of du Chaillu. There was nothing to suggest Spain or Spaniard. People and life were savage. The houses were built with walls of split bamboo, pervious to smoke from within and eyesight from without. The pointed roofs of palm-leaf ended in a central earthen pot that covered the radiating thatch. I was looking on the prototype of the Greek round temple and I had before me the origin of the elaborate central poppy-flower which crowned the marble Olympian tholos of Philip of Macedon. My thoughts, in fact, were rather far afield; for an "African" village is amazingly dull. But my speculations

came out of the Hellenic past and leaped from the chill of architecture to the human warmth of sculpture when the bare-legged Indian girls came down the rocky street to fill their water-pitchers. With one hand raised to the empty vessel on their head they descended with a pack-mule's sure-footedness and more than a pack-mule's grace. It was after they had waded into the lake, filled the jug, replaced it on their heads, and begun to reascend with both arms raised to steady the heavy burden, that I realized that eurhythmics were folly and that our daughters should be taught to carry water-jugs. And as they wore so little clothing with such obvious propriety,—but that ruins my scheme for our northern daughters.

There are other villages on the shores of Atitlan, slightly differing in size and appearance, but alike in their monotony. It is not the little towns which are interesting in Guatemala, but the open country. And among all the scenery through which I was to ride there was to be nothing more beautiful than this.

In clear weather Atitlan is a blue mountain-lake shut in by green heights and dark walls where waterfalls hang like white ribbons. The fine clear forms of the great volcanoes break the line of girdling hills and add their smooth green slopes to the scene's tranquillity. There are no vine-

yards nor gardens to suggest North Italy, but an incomparable fertility and a far-away inland charm of sunlit isolation.

In time of storm all this is changed. When the lightning pours over it and the rain-gusts sweep across it Atitlan has a sudden grim and terrifying appearance. The circle of rock darkens and closes in, the clouds come down like a cover to a kettle, and in the vast crater, lifted a mile in air above the Pacific level, the storm stirs wind and wave to a black witches'-brew in an uproar of water and air and fire. After it all, when the rain has passed and the wind has dropped, the green slopes suddenly reappear fresher and brighter and above the wild dark walls with their curled cornice of clouds shines the childishly innocent blue of Fra Angelico's paradise.

It is a region of moods and changing moments whose variety seems inexhaustible. Outstaying my intentions, exploring its woods and valleys and towns and climbing some of its heights, I found it ever more beautiful. When at last I came to leave it I was already convinced that I should find nothing finer in Central America. Though I knew that it could not be true, I had come to sympathize with the kindly old man of the inn who had said so simply and so quietly,

"Atitlan, you know, is the most beautiful spot in the world."

\* \* \* \* \*

I left Panajachel early in the morning. In a season where daily rain ruins the afternoon my habits were growing more and more matutinal. In the end I was to reach the native stage of ultimate attainment and saddle Colorada by candle-light ten minutes before the first dawn. But Panajachel came early in my travels, before a receding breakfast had reached those sunless hours, and it was seven o'clock before I was well upon my road.

The path climbed the steep mountain-side, leading at times along rocky shelves, at times by hewn steps of stone and once through the spray of a waterfall, while the lake sank slowly below me, growing bluer and brighter as it receded. New heights rose behind the familiar hills and far on the south-eastern horizon I saw a peaked hat of rock which I recognized to be Fire, the towering friend of my previous ride. At the top of the wall the path turned inland and I soon reached the large and uninteresting village of Solola.

It is not my intention to make a diary of such uneventful progress. Just as it is art's privilege not to paint everything in a landscape, so I intend to change the perspective which the ticking

clock of the present imposed upon me as I rode hour after hour and day after day, and to set the past in a temporal setting where many an hour in the saddle may drop from sight and intervening distances (if they were but dull stretches) may cease to divide.

On this day, therefore, I find myself passing through pine woods full of noisy flocks of the bluest of jays and straightway thereafter begging black-beans and tortillas in a thatched and smoky Indian hut, as though one had but to emerge from that bird-haunted thicket to encounter the dirty little village which so grudgingly prepared me so poor a midday meal. And hardly is the meal over when I am on a great hill-side, mounting amid orchid-covered oaks through cool, deep shadows, only to be caught in a torrential thunderstorm from which even those great trees cannot shelter me. The path turns into a flight of carefully paved steps, and the steps into a brown torrent where Colorada and I stumble up, with occasional backward glimpses at the uplands which we have left so far below us, till we emerge on a sodden Alpine meadow ten thousand feet above the sea. And here the sun comes out, the lush green shines, and song-sparrows try again their northern song. There are flowers, shepherds with their sheep, and over us all a bright

sky and a cool wind. It is that rare thing,—an idyll that is not just between the covers of a book but out in the world of real things where there is none of the falseness of fine writing. Being of that unenduring kingdom, it soon is over. In its place come muddy paths, hard to find and slippery to follow, marshalling a seemingly unlimited array of yet-remaining miles. But if one is fairly inured to the saddle and fond of the uplands, no more beautiful ride could be imagined.

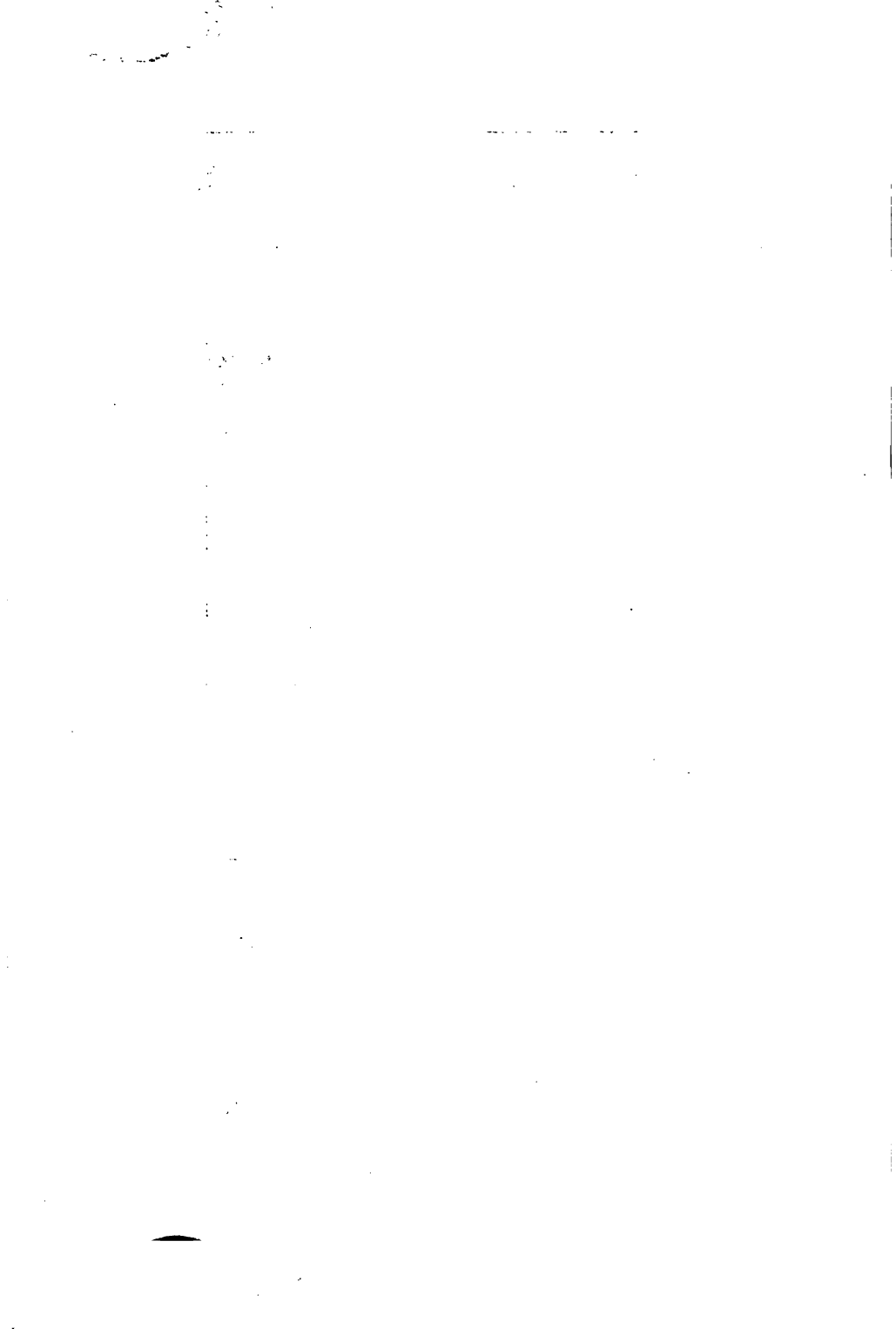
I must have loitered on my way, for it was nearly dusk before I came to the edge of the uplands. The twinkling lights were beginning to come out in the little checker-board of a town below me and before Colorada had swung her leisurely nose around the last zig-zag of the descent it was dark. Luckily there were hedges and soon there were houses to shut us in upon our stumbling path, and though once I thought I had found a sheer descent to Cocytus we came to the lights at last. They were electric and illumined street-corners whose signs announced numbered avenues and streets. Colorada assumed a metropolitan air of indifferent gentility whose leisure I ended rudely with my spurs. We clattered down the streets into the deserted market-place, gathered information from the sen-

try of the garrison, and ended our long day's ride in the Central Hotel, Totonicapan, Los Altos, Guatemala (C. A.). Colorada's stall was opposite mine, though an intervening couple of long-horned sheep, a sore-backed mare with her ragged rumply-coated filly, and an Indian stable-boy made communication difficult.

I dined poorly and slept well. When I woke it was early morning, grey with rain. My itinerary for the day was thus already settled,—to Colorada's complete satisfaction. At ten o'clock it cleared suddenly and I went a-foot to see the town, though I knew beforehand what I should find:—a cabildo, a garrison, and a line of general shops around an open paved square; a church, with dark, empty floor of red tile, wax images dressed in gaudy calicoes, altarpieces overloaded with gilding, and Indian women reciting endless petitions in their own weird tongue; beyond that, only an occasional open shop-front and the blank one-storied line of homes. To pass a sunny hour in the streets of Totonicapan one has need of the Old Dutch Masters' eyes, appreciative of homely squalor and the picturesqueness of petty things; but to pass a rainy afternoon in the same town one needs the devil's own indulgence for eternity. I returned to my quarters, lunched, and soon afterwards began my



SURVIVORS OF EARTHQUAKE



inevitable traveler's refrain of "Quid nunc?" After I had made a veterinary round of insincere affection which included two starved dogs (who were interested in everything), the mare and her filly (who were interested only in each other), the sheep (who were chiefly interested in salt), and three alien mules (who were interested in nothing at all),—after all this I looked at my watch and saw that it was half past two. I studied my map for an hour or more—and found that it was twenty minutes to three. Then I sat around for a long time and finally crossed the street to play on the billiard-table (for every Guatemalan town must have billiard-tables, sky-rockets, sewing machines, and a Temple of Minerva: nothing else matters). But the famous Mikado had been there before me and attained his infamous Object All-sublime. And now it was nearly three o'clock. A tame deer entered the room and had late luncheon on the floor and a large parrot, seeing me bored, obliged with an impersonation of a derelict Indian baby in acute whooping-cough. I flatter myself that I succeeded in openly wounding his histrionic pride by leaving the room at once.

It was now still nearly three o'clock. I found a bleary German who was taking "The Baths." He took them very early in the morning as he

preferred to precede native patronage. He objected to the Indian women more than to the men and had an almost profane aversion to the ultra-modern practise of what I might scientifically describe as syncolymbesis of the sexes. But my new friend soon left me to attend to some sausages (*sic!*) in a critical stage of manufacture, and after a little the clock at last managed to strike three. It was raining hard—and dinner was at six. In the distance, the parrot had taken to such fits of idiotic laughter that I determined to have him shot at sun-rise. Such are the diversions and excitements of a Central American village.

We are snobs with our affectations of culture, our sets and our fads and our civilized banalities. Instead of taking delight in our music and our art for what they are, we ruin our enjoyment with sophisticated prejudices and discriminations. How differently we should feel if only we could be brought to realize that cultural civilization is the inestimable sun that lights the horrible darkness of sentient life! I myself shall relapse into snobbery and discriminations. But for a little while, in Totonicapan, eight thousand feet in the hills, with never a book or a friend or a game or a theatre or a concert or a beautiful object, in rain and utter loneliness, I almost

understood the worth of our European heirloom of 4000 years.

What a difference rain can make! The dissimilarities of a Yorkshireman and a Neapolitan are largely a matter of rain. The Arab is an Arab because of the desert and the desert is a desert because of the rain. My Guatemalan life was a quilt-work of contrasting emotions, all traceable to that single cause. The Eternal within us is in league with the Temporal and the spirit's glass is only too often indistinguishable from the barometer. My mental weather-chart for almost any of those days of mule-back journeying might have run as follows:

As I rode up out of the valley in the morning and the bugles blew in the little town at Colorada's feet, the discomforts of the night were forgotten. The bugles were out of tune, but the sense of their discordance penetrated no further than the brain. The mist rose from the plain and the sunlight was clear and sharp on the hills. Day-light and morning air and an unknown path, they were like the singing of birds in one's heart and the blowing of fresh winds across the spirit. Ten hours later it was a different world. The rain poured down and the mountain-fog shut out every view. The steep paths were water-torrents,—endless brown fordings amid the

stones, slippery mud-slides elsewhere. There was no shelter, since the day's appointed goal must be made before dusk. The steady rain, the plodding pace became part of the mind. The spirit's eye grew as cloudy as the rain-hung corn-fields, motionless and impenetrable as the great dripping woods. But it all ended, with food and warmth and a bed at last. And the next morning under a blue sky I was off through the early light again and as I rode up out of the valley the bugles blew in some other little town at Colorado's feet.

Here more than elsewhere, life was a contrast of wet and dry. But I suspect that elsewhere, too, though it be less obvious than in Totonicapan, the weather is in the end responsible for most of our human behaviour.

And these intolerable reflections, likewise, were after all due only to the rain; and when it ceased within an hour I forgot my gloominess and went for another walk.

\* \* \* \* \*

Guatemala is a land where the small boy's prerogative of jeering and reviling the stranger for his strangeness' sake is under abeyance or unknown. Everywhere my costume aroused indignation in the dogs; but the Indians refrained even from that wordless comment which a stare con-

veys. That afternoon beyond Totonicapan, walking, though I obviously belonged on mule-back, only the four-foot mongrel remarked upon my condition; until, while trying to propitiate one of my yelping critics, I fell victim to suspicion.

Never have I seen such pitiful dogs as in Central America. Canine anatomy may here be studied without dissection. Graveyard carcasses slink on forlorn foragings. Even the frijoles and tortillas seem denied to them. The affection of their masters neither includes food nor excludes missiles. The poor animals are little better than starveling outcasts sneaking lifelong to the grave. And even the grave is precarious, or rather its absence only too assured. The cowed directors of their funerals, the buzzards, stare down at them from the thatched ridge of their own master's roof as though they begrudged them even those few days of living wretchedness.

So I was surprised at the suspicion into which I fell through being discovered in my overtures to a nasty little dog; for the beast had been born with his tail between his legs and a yelp in his throat.

Further on I assisted a young fowl who seemed unreasonably upset at the very natural discovery that she could not ascend a perfectly sheer embankment. During our efforts there appeared an

Indian boy. Only my distinguished leggings saved my reputation.

The indulgent reader will see that I am not wasting his patience upon anecdotes of the poultry-yard, but laying bare a deep racial difference.

For example, I hold it self-evident that everyone should be interested in young pigs,—little trotters and friskers I mean, delightful snouty little fellows with bright eyes. But I found that when I met them twinkling to market my eloquent interest was always viewed by the Indians with the uneasiness with which we regard the incomprehensible and fantastic. Yet a team of seven in harness trotting up a steep mountain-path is as much a sight as is a coach-and-four, especially if one considers that the slightest accident may convert the driver into a badly wound May-pole.

Everywhere my advances to animals were consistently misunderstood, even by the victims of my affection. Colorada alone came to comprehend that a raised hand can fall lightly.

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening when I entered for dinner I found three men already at table,—an abiding and inseparable trinity whose outward number I increased to four without in any way disturbing those properties peculiar to the triangle.

Of that mutually devoted crew the third never left any impression on me. From meal to meal I forgot him. He was one of those, no doubt, who keep the world's work done, reliable and unobtrusive, dull as the cog-wheel whose function in society he performed. I am ready to allow that he may have been the best man of the three; but as he made no impression I am obliged to leave him out. Of the other two there is more to say.

One was the German sausage-maker, my acquaintance of the early afternoon. Profanity was to his conversation what spices must have been to his sausages: a plentiful inspersion suited the climate. His past was a veritable sausage-meat of strange happenings. He was a man stuffed and seasoned with experience. But this I learned later, for at the time I had eyes only for the remaining spirit of that trinity.

He was an Indian and a barber. Small-headed, with dirty black curls standing out in nodding animation, he had the tiny alert eyes of a prowling night-animal. He used his forefinger in conversation and would cock his head and regard it with the bright excitement of a crafty child. He was forever saying witty things which to me as invariably seemed without point. By a display of interest and some faded photographs he tried

to lure me into submission to his black craft; but I wanted none of his barbarous rites, and I fear that a slight coldness sprang up between us. While the sausage-maker and I talked rheumatism and German submarines, he would watch us in moody silence like an Olympian estranged, an unsuspected shepherd of Admetus. Then suddenly he would blow off all his ill-humour in a sparkling geyser-jet of discourse, be-showering the little Indian waiter who at the end of an attentive listening would emit an "Ah, sí!" which showed only too clearly that he had made nothing of Figaro or of Spanish.

The sausage-maker was a different character. His shirt seemed always on the verge of dismissal to the tub, yet never so soiled itself as to bring about that painful separation. His suspenders dispensed with buttons by a seamanlike use of marlin at crucial junctions. Coat and hat were to him unessential, though Totonacapan is anything but tropical. His sharp face was wrinkled, worn more by that capricious weather which we call adversity than by the far less trying meteorological changes of wind and rain and sun. He had no respect for god or devil, much less for human-kind. But as this attitude arose from knowledge and not from braggardism, he was endurable enough (considering the latitude). In

fact he was socialist rather than anarchist, and seasoned enough to have discovered that the millennium would not occur during his life-time.

A fortnight later when I was again in Totonicapán he told me his story. And as I have no table-talk from that first dinner with the trinity, I may be allowed to enliven its rice and black-beans, faded meat, tortillas, stewed papaya, and coffee, by relating here as I later heard it

### *The Sausage-maker's Romance*

He began mortal miseries as a Hanoverian peasant-baby and gained a German strength of foot and tongue on a tiny farm. But of those bucolic years he had little to say and my first good glimpse of him was in the heart of Africa with the great Stanley. For more than a year he was member of the party: *quorum si pars magna fuit* one may perhaps determine by reading the memoirs of that strong-handed adventurer. When a Belgian caravan at length encountered them the smell of the coast was strong in the Hanoverian's nostrils. Without overmuch ceremony he said his farewells to Stanley and went with the Belgians down to the ships. From Stanley, he declared, he had learned his English,—the humour of which remark the great explorer would have been the first to admit. Perhaps

some of the fabric was laid in the jungle, but the embroidery seems to have been added later when he cruised the seven seas with the baccalaureate distinction of the fo'c'sle.

His exodus from the jungle could not have been entirely surreptitious. For later, in Australia, he encountered Stanley again, and Stanley, the great Stanley, clapped him on the back before all the crowd and acknowledged him for comrade. The exact words of that unforgettable greeting were sensible and sufficient: "By God, here's Weissmann!" said Stanley; and the tears came to the German's eyes as he told the incident.

Whaling and carrying cargo in sailing vessels the future stuffer-of-sausages had been blown like a thistledown about the habitable and less than habitable earth, nowhere striking root. But at last, somehow, he stuck in Central America, where he put some money into mines and gradually grew rich. That was life's hey-day. Marrying a Guatemalan girl he had children and contentment and an easy affluence.

And now mark the peripatesis and the good Greek descent into misery. Suddenly, in Costa Rica, wife and children died of fever and a failing investment shore away his wealth. Broken in heart and pocket, he returned to Guatemala

and there in the good German-American tradition took to an old and casual employment. The sausages which he made were bought by the German coffee-planters. As these are numerous, business went well enough, in a grey and dreary fashion. The lonely old wanderer stuffed his sausages and smoked his hams and shrugged his shoulders at the world, until age and the humors of his trade brought rheumatism. Then fell the final blow.

In need of a cure, he entrusted the business to his Mexican assistant and went away to the hot baths. He returned to empty rooms, to walls without pictures, floors without tables or beds or chairs or carpets, worst of all to a shop without showcase or stock and a shed without machinery. A sudden access of nostalgia had swept the Mexican across the border into a land where there is no finding of fugitives and no redress.

With nothing but the clothes on his back the old man had wandered to Totonicapan in the hills; and there the baths had cured him. He made sausages for the inn-keeper in lieu of coin of the realm. Three times a week he made them; the rest of the time, standing or sitting or reclining, he cursed the English and his rheumatism and lived forlornly between bed and board. In that dirty and uneventful town a long life of

adventure and marvel was shut up in a forlorn old body, fading slowly away into dreary forgetfulness.

I asked him whether it would do any good to make more sausages. "If I make more," he answered, "and give them to the Indians to peddle, they get drunk on the money and the sausages go to Hell. In this country," said he with concluding emphasis, "it's no damned use to work. . . ."

Such is the Sausage-maker's Romance; and if the story reads a little differently in the Angel Michael's golden book, the fault does not lie with me.

## CHAPTER II

### MIRAGE OF QUICHE

QUEZALTENANGO is the second city of Guatemala. It is not wholly uninteresting, as it offers the remnants of an old church, the ready spectacle of Indian market, and the associations of a history of at least four hundred years. It was on the nearby plain toward Totonicapan that Alvarado fought the tumultuous battle in which he broke the power of the Indians of Quiche. There is a peculiar flavour to these early incidents from the days of the *conquistadores* which, like tropic fruit, should be tasted at least once for the experience; and I can do no better than to serve this meal from the pages of Stephens' book:<sup>1</sup>

"We were again on classic soil. The reader perhaps requires to be reminded that the city stands on the site of the ancient Xelahu, next to Utatlan, the largest city in Quiche, the word Xelahu meaning "under the government of

<sup>1</sup>J. L. Stephens. *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. 2 vols. 1841. Harper & Bros. Long out of print, but not impossible to secure.

ten"; that is, it was governed by ten principal captains, each captain presiding over eight thousand dwellings, in all eighty thousand, and containing, according to Fuentes, more than three hundred thousand inhabitants; that on the defeat of Tecum Umam by Alvarado, the inhabitants abandoned the city, and fled to their ancient fortresses, Excansel the volcano, and Cekxak, another mountain adjoining; that the Spaniards entered the deserted city, and, according to a manuscript found in the village of San Andres Xecul, their videttes captured the four celebrated caciques, whose names, the reader doubtless remembers, were Calel Kalek, Ahpopgueham, Calalahan, and Calelaboy; the Spanish records say that they fell on their knees before Pedro Alvarado, while a priest explained to them the nature of the Christian faith, and they declared themselves ready to embrace it. Two of them were retained as hostages, and the others sent back to the fortresses, who returned with such multitudes of Indians ready to be baptized, that the priests, from sheer fatigue, could no longer lift their arms to perform the ceremony."

I may be fortunate enough to introduce the reader to the book from which this passage comes. The cumbrous title hides the garrulous and adventurous journeys of an American am-

bassador in search of a government in the days when Central America was a flame of civil wars and Guatemala was dominated by a remarkable Indian peasant, unable to sign his name but able to enforce his will. I came to a Quezaltenango void of incidents or life. Stephens reached it on the morrow of a revolution needlessly drowned in blood. So idle are these days and so stirring were those and so striking is the picture of the Indian Carrera, that it is Stephens who is here in place. . . .

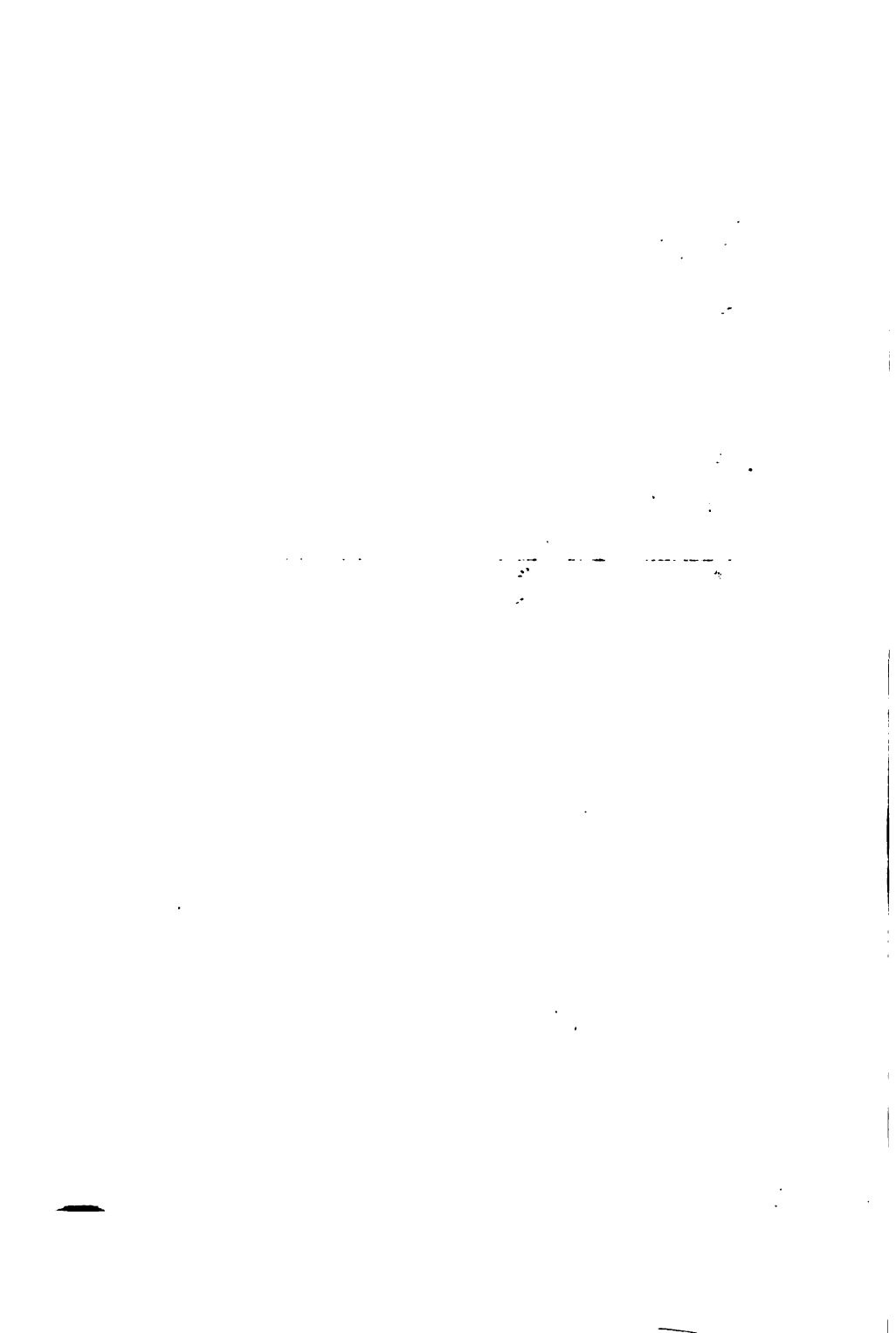
"Early the next morning Carrera marched into Quezaltenango, with the cura and Don Juan as prisoners. The municipality waited upon him in the plaza; but, unhappily, the Indian intrusted with the letter to Morazan had loitered in the town, and at this unfortunate moment presented it to Carrera. Before his secretary had finished reading it, Carrera, in a transport of fury, drew his sword to kill them on the spot with his own hand, wounded Molina, the *alcalde-mayor*, and two other members of the municipality, but checked himself and ordered the soldiers to seize them. He then rode to the *corregidor*, where he again broke out into fury, and drew his sword upon him. A woman in the room threw herself before the *corregidor*, and Carrera struck around her several times, but finally checked himself

again, and ordered the corregidor to be shot unless he raised five thousand dollars by contributions upon the town. Don Juan and the cura he had locked up in a room with the threat to shoot them at five o'clock that afternoon unless they paid him one thousand dollars each, and the former two hundred, and the latter one hundred to his secretary. Don Juan was the principal merchant in the town, but even for him it was difficult to raise that sum. The poor cura told Carrera that he was not worth a cent in the world except his furniture and books. No one was allowed to visit him except the old housekeeper who first told us the story. Many of his friends had fled or hidden themselves away, and the old housekeeper ran from place to place with notes written by him, begging five dollars, ten dollars, anything she could get. One old lady sent him a hundred dollars. At four o'clock, with all his efforts, he had raised but seven hundred dollars; but, after undergoing all the mental agonies of death, when the cura had given up all hope, Don Juan, who had been two hours at liberty, made up the deficiency, and he was released.

The next morning, Carrera sent to Don Juan to borrow his shaving apparatus, and Don Juan took them over himself. He had always been



HIGH STREET, ANTIGUA



on good terms with Carrera, and the latter asked him if he had got over his fright, talking with him as familiarly as if nothing had happened. Shortly afterward he was seen at the window playing on a guitar; and in an hour thereafter, eighteen members of the municipality, without the slightest form of trial, not even a drum-head court-martial, were taken out into the plaza and shot. They were all the very first men in Quezaltenango; and Molina, the alcalde-mayor, in family, position, and character was second to no other in the republic. His wife was clinging to Carrera's knees, and begging for his life when he passed with a file of soldiers. She screamed "Robertito"; he looked at her, but did not speak. She shrieked and fainted, and before she recovered her husband was dead. He was taken around the corner of the house, seated on a stone, and despatched at once. The others were seated in the same place, one at a time; the stone and the wall of the house were still red with their blood. I was told that Carrera shed tears for the death of the first two, but for the rest he said he did not care."

The description which Stephens elsewhere gives agrees well enough with the Quezaltenango of to-day. Yet it was a different town into which he rode. For in 1902, to the perplexity of all

observers, every living thing which could conveniently run or fly abandoned the nearby slopes of Santa Maria, the extinct volcano; and suddenly, a few days later, the cathedral of Quezaltenango was standing alone above the ruins of the town. Santa Maria, though baptized into the church with every ritual, had departed from the decorum of the saints. In a terrific explosion she had blown off one entire slope of her peak, and amid eruption and earthquake Quezaltenango had been destroyed.

Not long before this murderous disaster a scientist of distinction had pronounced Santa Maria dead. But he might better have said, "*Apartaos, que la joven no es muerta; sino que duerme.*" For among volcanoes there is no death, but only quiescence. In them the race of giants is not extinct. They are the true owners of Guatemala and men are only the ephemeral tenants of their treacherous domain. More and more I grew convinced that all there was of strange and fascinating and distinctive in that country was ultimately traceable either to the Indians or to the volcanoes. On these two hangs all that is picturesque and imaginative. Artistically they are fundamentals, the one giving outline and the other adding color.

In one sense it is only too truthful a jest to

say that the Indians add color to Guatemala. But I intended no gametal cynicism. Their bright dress, their bare legs and arms, their packs and wares more than offset the second-hand Americanism which is creeping over the country. Ignorant and superstitious and lazy, at least they are still themselves, with a bird's brightness of plumage to hide their primeval sadness.

If they are the hues of the landscape, the volcanoes are the form.

The race of volcanoes are the Greeks of the mountain-world, even as the Swiss Alps are its romanticists. Definite and logical, instinct with form, full of concealed energy, dark-souled withal and drawn to imaginative and terrible catastrophes, they combine an ordered calm of appearance with the restlessness of an unsuppressible interior ferment. Because they are not, like merely pretty things, negligible in the sphere of our action, they can attain to true beauty. Transcending the passivity of mere outward perfection, they are more than the insipid beings of the classic revivals: they are true Greeks. And like the Greeks, though they have been seemingly dead two thousand years or more we yet dare not ignore them to-day.

And so it is that a volcano does not merely add its peak to a landscape, any more than a new

outline merely adds its contour to a drawing. For the entire picture is so affected by the intrusion that the whole complex of emotions is changed.

Volcanoes, I am convinced, are wonderful things and more than the mere vent-holes of a crass subcutaneous condition in the terrestrial monster upon whom we lead our parasitic lives. Among their distinctions they include a property which I had imagined to be peculiar to Looking-glass Land: one can see them only by riding away from them. If one rides toward them, little by little, they disappear; and if one still persists so far as to try to ascend them, they vanish altogether and leave the rider amid huge forests on steep and interminable trails.

Quezaltenango is far enough distant from Santa Maria to make its sharp cone visible; but one must ride some fifteen miles further away into the hills around the town of St. Francis the High before its perfect and beautiful proportions rise completely into view. Best of all, it should be seen from ship-board on the Pacific. Then the broad level of the lowlands gives a ground-line from which the volcanoes rise, in color a pale greyish blue like smoke, a ragged and mighty line facing the sea. Tajumulco, Santa Maria, Atitlan, Fire, Water,—elsewhere in the

world there may be such a company, but I do not know where to look for it. Their height is no arbitrary mental calculation from an invisible level. Twelve and thirteen thousand feet they rise before the eye. Toward noon the clouds cover them and they drift off into the thickening sky, till it seems impossible that those sharp cones and perfect lines were ever there. But the next morning, pale and exquisitely clear, they float against the sunrise far astern.

But I was writing of Quezaltenango before the typical dullness of that prosperous little place induced me to turn to Santa Maria and her choleric tribe.

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North of the town there is much dull country, high water-worn table-land covered with corn and wheat and broken by bare tracts where the grass grows in tall isolated clumps. There one rides for hours with goal in sight and tires of every journey before it is ended.

Ordinarily the roads hereabouts are without life or interest; but on market-days they are transformed. St. Francis stands on a high bare ridge with the whitewashed cupola of its church visible across the countryside. Friday is full market. Up the steep winding pathways to the town the Indians toil in the sun, driving pigs and lambs,

the women with live turkey and other fowl slung on their back or with baskets on their heads, the men bent beneath their canisters. Even the small children come and do their share of transportation. Every yard of the square in front of the white church is covered. It is a tattered spectacle of many colors, and from a distance resembles a brilliant rag-quilt. And that, indeed, it is. The great tailor-made Republic north of Mexico little knows how much of the spirit of the Levant lurks on its own progressive and western continent. The line where the scavenger-buzzards begin marks a world unknown or ignored.

It is more interesting country to the West toward the Mexican frontier. Two hours out from Quezaltenango the hills are white with volcanic sand through which breaks the green of the maize. Further on, russet is added to the green and the white, and these three tones everywhere prevail. There is similar country in the Pyrenees where, too, in spite of the arid soil and the monotonous landscape the bare clear hills little by little press their inexplicable fascination till they grow to be part of one's memory and expectation.

These are fine hills for idle goers. On one side of the ridge the view drops back to the plain capped by the perfect cone of Santa Maria. Los-

ing this prospect one rides through the great woodlands of the mountain-crest and comes out on the other side upon another world, where beyond upland meadows rolls a lower land, wave after wave, to the smoky-blue hills of the Mexican border. As one keeps the crest these two views alternate. It is a solitary ride, quite off the travelled track; and if one does not wish to sleep by a tethered mule under a raining sky it is well to be off the ridge long before sundown. Riding lazily along, with my eyes out over forty miles of shower-streaked summer land, I came to a kind of moor, treeless and wild, with high clumps of grass on every side. Ten thousand feet above the sea can almost bring Scotch heather under the fifteenth circle. And here I met three wayfarers who had come up from the plains with their packs. They were a rascally looking crew (as the pirate-books say) and when they saw me riding alone on the blasted heath the three took a position on either side of the path and waited for me to come up. Withered and wild as was their attire they turned out to be good-natured, simple-hearted hill-people who owned a couple of farms on the slope of the moor. They had been to town fifteen miles away, had left at day-break and were only just returning; and what was I doing? merely looking? not selling sewing-

machines? with no commission at all? So we talked for a little about this and that, and said good-by. And such in general are the people of the country, simple and poor and kind. The solitary traveller is safer in this "lawless" land than in our own civilised communities of the North.

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Farther to the West, beyond the ridge which I have been describing, lies the department of San Marcos, more orderly and prosperous than is the Guatemalan wont. At a trifurcation of the road stand three signs which amaze one not a little: "Short-cut to San Marcos," pipes the little central trail; "Wagon-road to San Marcos," announces his broader neighbor to the right; "For Automobiles," booms the aristocrat to the left. All honour to the far-sighted Department which can look forward to that fusion of motor-car and aeroplane which alone will ever pass that way! Occasional bridges are omitted and the cross-cut sawings of the mountain torrents are ignored with dignity; but what does it matter? The road and the sign are there: that is the main thing. And no automobile has come to grief,—there are none in that part of the country.

The approach to the town lies through a straight dark avenue of firs at the end of which a gentleman-warrior (to me unknown) leans peril-

ously out from his pedestal. Four cabalistic carven dates serve to endear him to his country's memory. The town itself lies in pleasant fields surrounded by hills. On a high bastion in the centre a paved platform looks out over the house-tops. At its back stands an armoury, a real armoury, with look-out towers and swallow-tail battlements. This gives a military tone to the town. One feels that it is indeed only twenty-five miles to the frontier, that the bayonet and rifle rule on the Guatemalan border, that beyond those hills lies the lawless land. Besides, San Marcos thinks and speaks freely,—as the government would say, seditiously; and the sight of soldiery is always a good deterrent on a too-progressive department of a Central American republic. The townspeople seem active and efficient. Was it imagination, or were they also correspondingly less open and less courteous? After all, is it only the good-for-nothings in this world that are thoroughly lovable, only the shiftless who are good-natured, the incapable who have a soul and the brainless who have a heart? I hope not. Yet there are times in the tropics when the shadow of doubt runs over all that energetic Northern civilisation, of whose claims to supremacy not all of us are always so eloquent or so convinced.

At the hotel I came upon a courtyard full of gayety. The inn-keeper's little daughter was holding a birthday party and the space was crowded with children. Music was freely dispensed by a marimba, native glorification of the xylophone. The physics of this instrument are not uninteresting. Under each key of the wooden keyboard hangs a hollow tube of appropriate length, whose column of air vibrates to the note. This gives a resonant background and adds greatly to the timbre. A mere xylophone has something of the dryness of footsteps on a frosty morning or the shallow brilliance of an Oxford exhibitor; and this defect the marimba overcomes. But as it also assumes the quality of a piano played with damper raised, it is confusing rather than clear and carries with it some of the excitement of shouting or of moving crowds. Consequently it is at its best while playing martial or stirring tunes in the open air, when, if cunningly belabored, it becomes really rousing.

The children danced in and out under the drying garments of the week's wash. Yet it seemed as if even the frankness of these surroundings did not put them at ease. They were stiff and formal toward each other, in that delightful and unnecessary way which children adopt at their own parties until the rough-and-tumble of some

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ROAD AND RUIN, ANTIGUA



game makes them forget the starch and creases.

But there were no games on that occasion. The little boys struggled with the dance-steps and their best shoes, while the little girls displayed their conviction of an innate grace. Yet conscious aptitude and awkwardness ended at last. In the sight of all, a bright-coloured plaster bomb was knocked down from its swinging perch below the rafters, combining in its subsequent behaviour the good tradition of Humpty-Dumpty with the less pleasant one of shrapnel. There was a rush for the burst of little presents, and *homo naturalis* resumed his rule.

I judged that the marimberos were hired by the day; for the departure of the children affected them not at all. Their repertoire combined the American musical comedy with South American tunes. Of native melodies there were none; but I could not discover whether the omission implied a non-existence or merely well-bred suppression. There is said to be much native Mexican music, and the enthusiasm for the marimba seems to imply an indigenous interest. But it was with "*O la bella luna*" and with the Dollar-Princess that I had to satisfy my taste for the exotic.

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I went no further toward Mexico, but turned

northward from San Marcos, and at length eastward, until I was riding back on a parallel course, with incidental amusement and discomfort enough, but little to chronicle until I came to Santa Cruz Quiche and the broad green valley wherefrom the two great rivers of Guatemala rise.

It is an amusing plain through which to ride; for though it seems perfectly level, it cannot be traversed in a straight line from any direction. The roads and paths twist about sudden ravines and vast earth-crevasses, crossing on narrow tongues between five-hundred foot abysses, or plunge deep down into shadowy hollows wherein grow great trees whose peaks never reach the level plain. These barrancas are, next to the volcanoes, the most distinctive element of Guatemalan scenery. Occasionally they afford spectacular views, as when the road suddenly emerges on the brink of some great valley with steep uncloven sides in whose deep bed winds a stream. Ride half a mile further and you will look back over a level plain, unable to believe in the existence of what your own eyes saw so recently. Below Santo Tomas, for example, there is such a view. I came upon it unexpectedly at sunset after rain, and though I cannot describe it, neither can I forget it.

But my chronicle begins a few miles further West, at Santa Cruz Quiche, to which I woke on a sunny Sunday morning. It was fiesta and rockets were wasting themselves in the full glare of day, while a turkey in the courtyard was greeting every explosion with a gobble of enthusiasm so accurately timed that it must have been that pitiless recurrence of "zzzz . . . bang . . . gobble" which awakened me. I looked out over the littered court below. At one loud explosion a flock of birds wheeled by in terror and I thought of the piazza of St. Mark's in Venice and the pigeons flying up at the sound of the sunset cannon. A sudden ennui came over me, a disgust of the dirty unlettered towns and of the whole fertile and futile, beautiful and barbarian land to which I had exiled myself for a summer's caprice. One has such feelings on waking in an unknown Indian village with the memory of a long day's ride still in one's arms and legs. The emotion wears away almost as quickly as the physical fatigue; but it is well to recall its poignancy in after-days when one looks back with self-deceiving regret to the joys of solitary muleback in New Spain.

I was intent on seeing the ruins. Near Santa Cruz once stood the capital of the Indians in the days of the Spanish conquistadores and some of

the walls of their ancient town still stand with broken towers visible afar. With a small boy of ten years for my guide, I started out on foot and came in twenty minutes to rubble walls, drear but real remnants of Indian work.

Thanks to those curious earth-crevasses of which I have spoken, the town had been defended by natural moats hundreds of feet deep, upon whose inner lip rose the fortification walls. The general workmanship was rather poor. Though some of the stones had been hewn, the technique was after all only a mud-concrete, quite unlike the marvellously jointed Inca masonry of Peru. At one point were traces of a gateway and remnants of a tower, still some twenty-five feet in height, roughly square, with a slight batter. Half-way up, it had a guard-room, as though hollowed out, with traces of the incline of the stairway which led up to it.

The site is strewn with fragments of coarsely glazed red earthen-ware of rather uniform clay, showing traces of the potter's wheel. I picked up quantities of obsidian splinters, black volcanic glass, the tools of this early folk. I found also a little head of terracotta, slightly rough, but full of traces of a finer touch than one would have expected.

In the side of the steep slope of one of the

guarding ravines there is a gallery hewn in the soft rock,—a passage some twelve feet high and some hundred yards long with small chambers opening off on either side. One of these rooms ends in a sudden pit, a black vertical shaft leading (the natives told me) to a lower floor with many rooms. All are empty; and the walls are without trace of ornament. They seem to have served as store-rooms rather than burial vaults. Poking and peering about by candle-light deep in the hillside, I felt some of that sense of slipping out of place in the centuries which I take to be the emotional element of a first visit to the Palæolithic caverns of Spain and the Dordogne. But here there was drawn neither bison nor elk. There was only the bare testimony of the dark and empty passages.

Gazing from these feeble remnants of power out over the most beautiful plain in the country, I could not realize that this was the Utatlan of which I had read, that here had been human sacrifice to Indian gods, that here had come Alvarado with his Spaniards and broken the last resistance of a mighty people. Guarded by the great ravines here had been palaces of the kings of Quiche with courts and towers and decorated walls, altars and idols, chieftains and warriors. Only a hundred years ago (if we are to trust

Stephens' informants) the palace with its garden was still to be seen. Thirty years later Stephens himself saw the ruins of the altar of sacrifice but otherwise little more than I. In that short interval had come the suspicion of hidden treasure and the destruction of the buildings that Alvarado had spared. Ichabod, indeed! It all exists only in printed books and old handwritings (although it may be that it never existed elsewhere in quite the sumptuous glory of the chroniclers). Certainly it lives no longer on the green plain of Santa Cruz, though the corn still springs, no doubt, from the moulderings of Indians and Spaniards slain in battle.

"Well," said the friendly inn-keeper on my return to the modern town a mile away, "and how were the ruins? For my own part, I have never troubled to go to look at them." Yet he had lived there all his life.

I found Santa Cruz a little less unendurable than I had expected. Its town-square has unusual distinction. At dusk, especially, it has the charm which often comes with the not too clearly seen. Then there stand against the sky three tall forms whose mutual contrast is like the contrast of different races. There is the tower of the garrison, in three receding stories, well-poised and graceful, a memory of Spain. Then there is the

façade of the church, stiffly vertical, a mask and a sham, like the false front of an early Tuscan church. Between the two is the blown bubble of the cupola above the transept, a thing of curving outline and balanced thrusts and strains, crying attention to a mechanical function well performed. These are the three against the sky. But Santa Cruz has no idea what they all mean.

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I rode in the late afternoon to Santo Tomas,—whose simple and pious name appeals to the natives less than their own long-drawn and sibilant Chichicastenango. It stands on a hill rather prettily; but further than that I know little about it. For I left at dawn and rode through wild country, up and down by ridge and gorge, gradually mounting through ragged hillsides to high unwooded slopes with ever-widening views of the plain of Quiche, the valley of the River Motagua, and the blue barrier mountains which guard the low, wet, and wild jungles of Peten. I met no one and passed no houses for many miles. But the world grew broader and broader till it came to be a vast spectacle of trembling light whose distances were as blue as the background hills of the Venetian painters. The path was hot and stony, up and up without pity. Near the ridge came a last open view as wonderful

in width and power as anything in all the country; and then the road took to the great, cool forest, and the light of the far blue hills and lowlands was suddenly shut out, to reappear no more. At the damp watershed I crossed a waving meadow of thistles and forget-me-nots,—fit symbol of the mixed feelings of the traveller who has climbed those arid hills for hours without food or friend, yet has been rewarded by the ever-memorable blue of those clear fifty-mile expanses.

A long winding descent on the other side led down into the high cornland from which my journey had commenced nearly a month ago. I had been to Mexico and back, with interest but without adventure, keeping always to the ridge of the continent and the cool open uplands. And now I was riding in the last of Los Altos, heading eastward for Guatemala City and the slow descent to warmer lands.

Having ridden all day without food, I was both tired and hungry when I reached Tecpan. But I postponed dinner and sleep to watch the natives with lighted candles escort Christ to the village church. Dressed in a cheap imitation of purple brocade, his face tear-stained and pitiable, he had stumbled to his knees beneath his cross. He was borne on a platform upon the shoulders

of four men while a few brass horns improvised a sort of Ases Tod. Before him two tall battered candlesticks from the altar had joined the procession. Behind came the Indians and the lighted candles,—large candles, small candles, fat ones and lean ones, twisted ones, colored ones, all with their gob of fire. The little girls were enjoying the excitement of keeping the thin flames alight, and whispered and pushed and giggled. The women were clearly devotional, the men ceremonious. The sun was down, and this barbarian cortege moving through the gathering nightfall seemed like the funeral of some Cachiquel hero. Indeed, I asked a man with a wart on his face what festival this was and whether some one was dead. "It is Christ," said he, "coming from the house where he lives." That is all I learned. Candles and music passed down the street and I went in to dinner.

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Below Tecpan there is a rocky hole low down in the green bank and through it the traveller sees trees growing and the light shining, as though within that hill were a garden of the good people. It is a queer and unexplained glimpse and I was careful to leave it so, lest that fragile faith in the folk of the hollow hills should be crushed once more when the miracle was understood.

My experience at Santa Cruz made me unambitious to search out the stones of the old Indian stronghold of Tecpan-Quautamala. I cared more for the clear stream and green grass and English shadows below the town, things neither primitive nor intangible. Any one with half a soul in his body will do the same in Guatemala or in Turkey or any ancient land, and turn from the five graceless stones of an ancient town, thankful that the sky does not crumble nor the landscape pass away.

This is the cornfield of the gods, comparable to the Lombardy plain whose vast stalks of maize, rioting in the heat, so strongly affect the traveller come down from the cold and rainy Tyrol. But here the aloes line the lanes and down in the barrancas unfamiliar shadow falls close from the tropical trees. It is a world of its own, good to ride in, growing gradually beloved as its first strangeness and hostile formlessness wear away. The villages are hidden in the fields. Five minutes' riding leaves them behind, with only the white dome of the church looking out across the level corn.

The volcanoes re-appeared, first Fire and then Water. Three miles to the south of me was Patzizia, the rainy village from which I began my book. At Zaragoza I was in the highroad to

the capital, among mules and horses and ox-carts. At Chimaltenango my senses, trained to loneliness, resented the advanced civilisation which a month ago I could not even discern. Guatemala City would only depress me with its reckless modernity. So I turned aside and rode down into the basin between the volcanoes, down into the black-green of coffee-farms where the hillsides were like thunder-clouds of outward-bellying trees and the road was dark with bamboo and fern and palm. And so through delightful shadow of greenery I came to the one town of real interest in the land, the oldest in Central America, Antigua, City of St. James of Gentlemen.

### CHAPTER III

## ANTIGUA

PICTURE a round green valley, a bowl whose ragged edge is an encircling line of wooded ridges and sharp volcanic peaks. Below a sky bluer than that of Sicily the woods begin, compact and billowy as summer thunder-caps. Below these are dark stretches of coffee-plants, and down in the bottom of the bowl is a checker of red roofs and white domes. That is Antigua.

Suspicion might well attach to any vista which claims to be more lovely than a glimpse into this cup of green. Its nearest rival, Florence from Fiesole, cannot match it for mere beauty. The elements, indeed, are much the same: red-tiled roofs of a town below, a valley-basin, and enclosing hills. But Italy can never wholly conceal nor reconcile its soil's decrepitude. Its landscapes have an arid hint of three thousand years of peasant farming. That is part of its charm, no doubt; but the charm of the New-World's fresh fertility is truer to our instinctive preference of live things to dead.

Yet Florence is unrivalled, because we see it with our minds and memories. Just so, few people of intellectual integrity would exchange the Alban hills for my great volcanoes or an acre of the Campagna for all the coffee-plantations of Guatemala. But Antigua, alone in Central America, has this same mirage of the past upon it to make enchantment out of dirty streets and crumbling stones. For Brunelleschi's dome there are only the white cupolas of the Spanish churches, yet these are leaven of art enough to make the bread of life.

I have ventured the comparison with Florence. Yet what have I to offer to match an hour's walk on the Lung' Arno past the bridges and back by the Palazzo Vecchio and the Mercato with Or San Michele? Not much, I fear. In Antigua one loves little things. It is enough to stare at a house-corner with a queer window-seat, or to mark a cactus' ear springing from the joint of a roof, most fantastic of finials. And after all, is not this the spirit of those who really love Florence—to look for the casual, which is the true artistic? And would not a rambling painter bless the fertility which turns roof-tiles into the green of moss and the golden-yellow and yellow-green of mouldy growths, in a wealth and play of colour that even Italy cannot show? Yet in spite of

the warning, my hour's walk may seem so very trivial! . . .

Here is an open shop. A Spanish girl has brought her poodle to be sheared. She has stretched the little animal out on the counter; the scissors are already at work on his woolly overcoat. From the main square a drum snares and two ambitious buglers plunge through an ill-advised call. It is the stroke of the hour. A school is reciting in unison at the top of unmellow childish voices some lesson of the day.

Occasional dark shadows cross the white and dusty street. Look up and you will see dark birds on the bright blue sky, graded from the sharp large wings of the lower levels to small blotches a mile in air. These are the scavengers, the pest-averters, cleaners of street and court. These are the buzzards. They sit on the roofs, their ugly grey-cowled faces thrust forward, their necks bent. They stalk in the streets, sombre and evil. In the clean sky they bring the pollution of their carrion-fed bodies. A malign benevolence, they ward over the tropic lands. One sees their circling company high in air, while the foothills still hide the villages from view. A map of the sky above Central America with only the buzzards indicated would perform every service of a gazetteer.

Above the one-story houses the old churches seem like giants of ancient days; for ruin and desolation add to their apparent size. Here, too, the buzzards perch on the broken walls. Inside, the floors are lost in vegetation. You may see the rents which the earthquakes made through masonry so many feet thick that it leaves only the more apparent the vanity of the builders. The façades have still their saints in the niches. In the side walls great octagonal ports with double splay still mark the windows. Here and there, the springings of the vaults, the arches of the doors are standing.

A blind beggar with his dog is going his well-planned round. . . . Over the portal of the courtyard of the church of San Buenaventura stands the little saint in person, dressed in pretty blue, with a broad-brimmed black hat and a staff. His tilted face has a melancholy and pathetic air, in contrast to his spruce and bright attire, . . . An Indian girl passes, carrying vases of brilliant flowers for the church.

Everywhere along the street there are glimpses through open doorways into gardens and courtyards. How fine to have a sixty-foot tree in one's house! . . . On a roof there is growing a prickly-pear, like the hairy green ears of some

strange elephantine animal who lives in the house beneath.

Inside the cathedral the shrines are loaded with dolls in brilliant frocks. These wax-figures in muslin clothes with sweeping wings of tin are the queen of heaven and the angelic company for whom the candles are lighted and the rockets make their noise, for whom the bells clatter and a shrewd church holds its ceremony of tinsel and vestments and incense.

Then there are the Indian women washing in line along the street, each before a stone basin which she fills with water from a central pool.

Last of all, there is the ruined church which serves for Indian market. That is a charmed haunt, always with much to sell and much to see. May the God of the North help the temperate stomach which ever encounters the food that one here sees mashed and stirred and brewed! The mere look of some of it can make one ill. But the rest is all brilliant colour of clothes against the dark skins of the women, of baskets of fruit against the mouldy walls, and of an open blue sky over all.

And that, briefly, is an hour's walk in Antigua.

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In these lands the houses are built with large bricks of sun-dried mud. These, if they stood

alone and exposed to the weather, the rains would soon disintegrate; but thickly plastered with stucco, they seem to wear as well in that climate as our more costly structures in colder lands.

It would be easy to paint a picture of an Antiguan street. A child's box of colours has everything needful. The first house is to be light vermillion, the next blue, the next yellow, the next lilac, all in clear bright colours set side by side without transition. The effect is naïve and simple-souled. It brings with it a child's gayety. It has the spirit of a Noah's-Ark, a toy-town shining in the sun.

The houses are all of a single story with overhanging eaves set at slightly different levels. Looking down the vista of houses, one has the illusion that one could ride along the sidewalk and touch the eaves with uplifted hand. In reality the windows and ceilings are very high, making the rooms airy and cool. The house-fronts are necessarily long; for the people live *in extenso*, since they may not live *in alto*. Though the volcanoes are almost wholly extinct, earthquakes are perennial, as the story of the town will witness; and for that reason the two safe dimensions in domestic architecture have to make up for the perilous third. The fronts are plain, a flat expanse of uniform colour broken only by

large window-grills that project out into the sidewalk. An Antiguan window is not, as with us, a mere glazed hole in the wall; for between the iron bars of the outer grill and the glass of the casement there is a little territory, in the street but not of it, a little balcony where one may lean one's arms and gaze up-village and down. Here the women put the little children and close the window behind them. Out-of-door prisoners, they watch securely the grown-up world through the gratings of their little cell. These self-same windows have also another common use, though I should suppose a certain tantalization to be attendant upon the ceremony. As the Spanish catch goes,

*And perilous spots are the window-places  
For mothers whose daughters have pretty faces!*

The streets are all alike, save where around the central square the blank walls give way to open shops. Such is Antigua from without. But nearly every one of all those unattractive fronts hides a courtyard full of flowers and shrubs and running water, and no passer-by can tell how much or how little luxury and comfort the tinted plaster conceals.

It is a tropical instinct to ignore street-fronts

and to live about an internal court. Where our northern windowed houses gape like sponges or honey-combs upon the street, the ancient Greek and Roman and the modern Levantine and Spanish dwellings turn blank faces to the passer-by and live secluded about their hidden yard, whose tempered sunlight and flowers and caged birds are a refuge from the barren and dusty world without.

I think that the honest visitor to Pompeii might well allow that the sight of the ancient houses, even where the peristyles have been rebuilt and replanted, has never brought that feeling of comfort which emanates from the really liveable and homelike. In the grey desolation of that terrible skeleton of an ancient town, the classic mirage makes life distant and chilly and Latin. But in Antigua the Pompeian house lives again, to take us back to the year 70 without the qualms of erudition and to make a real and present pleasure out of the dreary ruined matter of our Italian memories. The delight of houses lies always in the discovery of their fitness to be lived in; and here in Antigua life is unusually lovely with its dreamy fusion of out-of-doors and in. The open court is a garden of colour and perfume. Plants hang in swinging pots and birds sing in wooden cages. Sitting beneath the red slope of the roof that runs around this inner para-

dise, one sees the familiar cone of Agua standing over the town as Vesuvius stands above Pompeii. The comparison is only too fitting. Fertile and undreaded, both have destroyed those who trusted to their deceptive protection and lived so serenely at their feet.

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The Antigua churches are built of brick laid in thick mortar to form a concrete mass. Walls, arches, vaults, and domes are all so constructed, and all are remarkable for their solidity. This gigantic Roman technique is enlivened in true ancient Roman manner by a facing of decorated stucco, behind which the true structure vanishes, while a more or less plausible system of "Greek" columns and entablatures makes feeble pretence of responsibility.

Where the buildings lie in ruins, one can but admire the tenacity of this concrete. Fallen vaults lie in gigantic masses. Instead of crumbled mortar and scattered brick, huge striped boulders block the way. The Spaniards built against earthquake; and though they failed, they proved themselves great builders, followers in the structural traditions of imperial Rome.

Their ornamentation was of another sort. Heirs to the indiscriminating decadence of the last of the Renaissance, they played the usual

havoc with their inheritance. They wound stucco spirals around the simple uprightness of the classic column. They finished the façades with ungainly volutes. They broke the wall-spaces with unnecessary niches in which they put bishops and angels and saints. And finally they attacked spandrels and lunettes with moulded and painted arabesques. One can hardly imagine to what height of revelry this mania for stucco twinery could lead, until he has seen these ruins. On one façade which I well remember, column-bases, shafts, and capitals were overlaced with leaf-patterns; the entablature was a succession of braid and vine and scroll; the wall-niches were covered and crowned with intricate designs; and not an inch of wall-space was left without ornament. The Gothic outline that topped the doorway made spandrel-room for bewigged and wild-eyed angels amid a truly tropical luxuriance of auxiliary fillings. The result is marvellous in its richness and gorgeous at a distance, but disappointing on closer scrutiny. In any case, it is a masterpiece because it is the consummation of its kind. It deserves the most careful preservation in detail photographs and coloured drawings. There could hardly be a better memorial of Spanish influence in America than an exhaustive and adequate publication of the Antiguan ruins.

In the old cathedral is yet another remarkable example of moulded stucco. The sunlight pours through the fallen dome and thus illumines the pendentives and the crowning circular frieze in all their richness of intertwining ornament. In each pendentive stands an angel dressed in broad flounced skirt and ribboned knee-boots which give a strange air of earthly cavalier to these inhabitants of heaven. They swing censers against an amazing background of writhing and interlacing cords, above which there circles a frieze as intricate as filigree. Above the aisles stretch wall-spaces between the pendentives, and these are pierced by a splayed window whose receding mouldings have the richest and least analysable ornament of all.

But it must not be supposed that all the churches have this abundant grace of surface. On the contrary, some of the façades are ugly in their plainness. The solidity of their walls is echoed in heavy windows, squat columns, and deep niches. A favorite feature is a great octagonal window, heavily splayed, which looks like a gigantic port-hole between the heavy buttresses. Even the niches not uncommonly assume this form, and the unfortunate façades become unwieldy and graceless.

For the rest, these old churches are a matter

for the wandering idler or the architectural historian. For the one they are inexhaustible in their ruined charm and the spell of their associations; for the other they have a variety that only the trained eye can truly see.

Antigua is viewed in half a day, yet known and understood not even by those who have visited it a score of times, much less (of course) by those who live there all their lives.

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The church of Santa Clara is unmolested by antiquarian veneration. Muck of a cow-stable covers the narrow space in front of its façade. The portico is an Indian's home. A tiny fire smokes on the once holy floor, and gourds and dirty cooking-things lie littered about. When I visited it no one was at home. In the roofless nave I found a patch of corn with banana-plants down the middle and an Indian girl curled up asleep on a bundle of dirty rags. In the cloister the heavy vegetation hid the ruins of the two-storied ambulatory. In the centre, within a thicket, stood the old fountain with water still running into its many-sided basin. I could not help feeling that not one mere Indian girl, but all the old grandeur of Spain was sleeping there, ruined and overgrown. No one thinks of it or cares for it now. Rain and sunlight stream into

the house of incense and candle-light, that a dirty Indian may live on bananas and corn where his ancestors knelt at prayer.

Nearby are greater ruins and mightier desolation. No doubt it is a great exaggeration to compare the church of St. Francis with the Baths of Caracalla. Yet some kindred emotion haunts this greatest of Antigua relics, which, like the Roman, has its own secret of largeness and vastness. The piers and many of the arches still stand; but the roof has fallen in, bringing, as in Santa Clara, sun and rain through its shattered vaulting to foster a riot of green in every place where seeds may fall or blow. There is still some of the old carving on the spandrels of the depressed arches which carry the *schola cantorum*—rosettes and twining ribbons. Here and there in other parts painted arabesques shine with a clear and unexpected freshness of blue or green or brown. But it is the rank desolation and the emptiness that bring a sense of greatness for which the actual measurements give no warrant.

Adjoining are ample ruins of refectory and dormitory which serve to increase the impression of one-time ecclesiastical magnificence.

One of the old bells, a fine piece of figured casting, hangs in the belfry of the church. From its crumbling eyrie one looks across Antigua.

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Santa Clara is in the foreground. Beyond stand the cathedral and the mayoralty and the barracks which frame the Plaza. Beyond these are red roofs, and beyond these the hills.

On the whole, though there was much building, it was not a period of great architects. The structures were simple and massive; the plans are straightforward and obvious, as good plans should be. But as the ornamentation is accessory rather than integral, with all the illogical and unnecessary evils of the baroque, I imagine that they make finer ruins than they ever made architecture. Their number and nearness to each other are barely explicable. The townsmen claim the ruins of more than forty churches. I failed to count more than half that number, but a greater patience might well have been rewarded. There must have been a vast clan of priests; and though in Spanish days the capital may have been a larger town than the present Antigua, yet the most generous calculations leave a host of idle churches and idle churchmen. Old accounts add that the furnishings were very costly, and that gold and precious stones were plentiful. Legend, perhaps; yet it must have been a strange period of priestly splendour dominating a simple and pious savage race. From all of that, enough remains to make Antigua a charmed spot such as

we find so often in the Old World and look for so vainly in the New. Antigua has character and atmosphere. It is not a commercial ant-hill, but a ruined soul. That is one reason why it is dirty and uncomfortable and lazy and good-for-nothing; for these are often part of that unworldly gift which we call temperament.

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In the ruins of one of the largest churches the Indians hold their market. Fore-court, nave, and cloister, all three are filled with colour. There is no hubbub and stir, no crying of wares nor Italian penny-drama. The women squat on the ground with their little store spread out before them. They have carried every ounce of it to town upon their heads; so that each has a mere basketful to offer, and their day's profits are decidedly *por menor*. At least half of them bring their babies. I never tired of the little round dark faces with shining black shoe-button eyes that looked out so contentedly from the fold of dirty cloth in which they had been slung upon their mother's back. Savage babies, having no conviction of self-importance, neither play nor howl. They are jogged into market (for the Indian always trots while on errand) and spend the day *en papoose*, silent and unremonstrative.

On four sides stand the shattered walls, their

core of red brick laid bare through the broken plaster. Where the surface is still good on soffit of arch, on impost, or on springing of some fallen vault, the arabesques keep their colour and their line, reminiscent of Spaniard and of Moor. Overhead is the open sunny sky. From here and there one catches a glimpse of the peaked hats of the volcanoes. What a setting for the blotched and huddled colours of the Mayas' petty merchandry! Little by little one learns the names and natures of all the strange wares; but the first effect is still the best, before knowledge has intervened between the senses and the imagination, or familiarity has dulled the eyes to the medley of shapes and hues.

On the walls is a stencilled list of the probable articles for sale, with the amount of the *octroi* on each—a tax so minute that there is no currency to pay it. Every Indian bringing goods to market surrenders a coupon to the official at the doorway in payment for his right to sell. "From him that hath not. . . ." No doubt it is justifiable revenue; yet the American visitor emerges from such a scene with a feeling of awe for his own affluence.

The Indians are a fascinating people. I have always been suspicious and a little impatient of the present-day cult of our own vanished redskins. Through the cloud of sentimentality one

seems to discern a race unbelievably cruel, savage, and shiftless. The present-day Guatemalan native has only the last of these characteristics. He is not manifestly related by race to the Indians of North America, whose high cheek-bones and peculiar profile he lacks. Instead the untrained observer is sometimes reminded of Japanese peasant types; and this resemblance is accentuated by the rough short skirt, the sleeved blouse, and the broad-brimmed hat in which the men are so often dressed. At other times the Mayas of the carved walls of Palenque and the idols of Copan seem to have come to life.

The Indians still speak their native tongues, in which I was tempted to seek instruction until I discovered that in Guatemala alone there are some twenty dialects. The sound for the most part is harsh and guttural, full of *tsh* and Scottish *och*. At times I thought that its effect could be best suggested by saying that it was like Welsh, only more so; at other times it seemed a flood of whispered gutturals. To hear Indian children talking Spanish is to listen to the twittering and squeaking of bats. Many of the men know no Spanish. To all one's remarks and inquiries these invariably shout "No! no!" in a loud and seemingly terrified tone.

Western Guatemala, in fact, is not a Spanish,

but an Indian land. Ninety-five per cent of the population is Indian (and to my thinking, if a strain of Indian blood is determinative, the other five per cent is rather Indian, too). They are a silent and incurious folk, dumb beasts of burden without greeting for each other as they pass. They have few jests among themselves and laugh but little. Of course, there are exceptions like the whistling landlord of San Carlos Sija (whose extensive repertory of cheerful sounds includes no recognizable tune); but sober hilarity and banter are strange to them. They are addicted to the terribly strong brandy which is manufactured from sugar-cane. On Sunday evening the approaches to the villages are thick with reeling or fallen figures. One sees with repulsion drunken women with children slung on their backs, lurching across the road. They will roll about on the steep dirty pavings in drunken stupor, or lie all night by the roadside in the rain: and the child must suffer.

Such drunkenness, however, is a Dominical exception. On their sober week-days they are a much more attractive race. The men frequently are handsome and the women beautiful. One morning I saw an Indian standing in the doorway. His brown legs were bare to the loins; his ragged clothes were slung, rather than worn, about his

shoulders, and there was a barbaric touch of colour in the faded brilliance of red and the soiled white with which he was festooned. He carried a net on his back, and the weight of its pack made him stoop. He was holding out some dirty bills and making a helpless and wordless appeal to someone beyond my sight. Behind his clear hawk-like profile there played the strong sunshine of early morning; and the doorway, framing him in, made still more striking and picturesque that new-world silhouette.

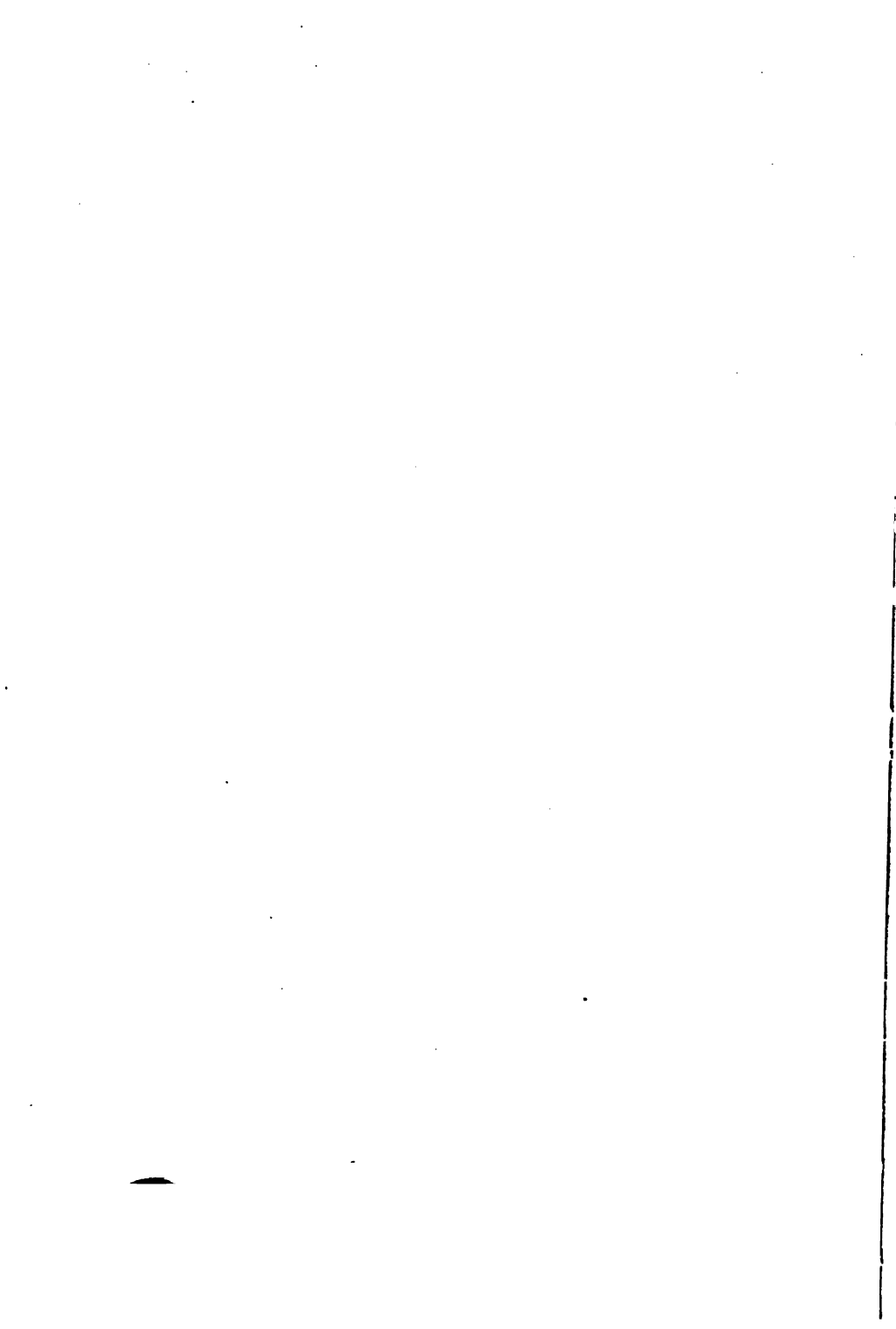
The young girls have fine erect bodies which they are not taught to hide nor need to display. From carrying all their burdens on their heads, they develop a carriage and a poise which puts our northern ways to shame. The men, on the other hand, by putting everything on their backs, soon develop a slouching and slovenly gait, which the women are quick to acquire as soon as they have children to carry about.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was eager to ascend Agua, though I knew that the season was anything but propitious. Every day by noon the cone was under cloud, while the afternoon rains made camping difficult. Accordingly I determined to make the trip in a single day, and drove off in the complete darkness of four o'clock. In the course of two hours I learned



FEAST OF THE VIRGIN, GUATEMALA CITY



much of the patience, goodness, and long-suffering of that intangible destiny which we name the Center of Gravity. The road was washed-out and probably dangerous; but as the driver did not seem to mind, it seemed unreasonable for me to object. At sunrise we were two thousand feet above Antigua on the skirts of the volcano. Here stood a wretched hamlet, Santa Maria, and here the local despot furnished horse and guide and breakfast and cordiality.

There is a trail to the summit. In spite of occasional obstacles it is excellent going. Half-way up I declined to have the blood of even so small a thing as a lank and ribbed nag upon my soul, and proceeded more rapidly on foot. After a few thousand feet of deep tangled woodland, the heavier vegetation became discouraged and little by little gave way to pine and grass. At the top there was only arid and stunted growth.

The crater was a wild sparse bowl, ringed with black and brown cliffs a couple of hundred feet high. The volcano had obviously been long extinct. The view was the thing.

The Pacific coastland lay twelve thousand feet directly below, a greenish blue sea of vegetation merging into a palish blue ocean of water. On the other sides were the hills and the volcanoes,—Fire, just across the way; Pacaya and the Kettle

to the East, with the ravishing glint of the sky-blue lake of Amatitlan directly underfoot. It was an Æschylean Prometheus view,—nothing else can give the spirit of blown air and sheer height and outspread earth and sea.

Within half an hour the clouds shut me in with cold fog and whistling winds, and I was glad to descend. I reached Santa Maria in the early afternoon and Antigua in time for dinner. It was fortunate that I returned so early, as it chanced to be the festival of St. James and the town was *en fête*.

After dinner I followed the crowds to the square (which is the only really picturesque thing in Guatemala) and there I watched a man in a frame of sputtering fuses and exploding fireworks. He trotted up and down, followed by the boys of the town, who charged the shower of harmless sparks and taunted him until some sudden volley of squibs and bursting fire-balls put them to flight. No doubt you have guessed the tradition: it is all that is left of toro and toreadores.

Central America has such a passion for fireworks that even the broad daylight is filled with the unsexed and feeble fury of noonday rockets. On Sundays the mass-goers are greeted with them at the church-doors; the dead are buried to their popping; the returning pilgrim has a couple on his

back, to set off when he reaches home. Noise is a ritual to primitive minds; and perhaps a rocket-flight imparts the same emotion as a church-spire. Indians who are too poor to buy bread still have their "cohetes." As I write, and as you read, there are rockets blowing their heads off in a thousand Indian villages between Mexico and Panama. And the black buzzards on the house-tops are paying not the slightest attention to their explosion.

\* \* \* \* \*

Often I looked up longingly to the peak of Fire; but I had no tent and in the rainy season I could not go without one. So I stayed below and contented myself with gazing. I cannot tell you what a spectacle he is. After a drenching June rain a cloud-belt of unimaginably brilliant white will hide all the lower reaches and leave only the sunny peak of red against a quilted sky's patchwork of white and blue. In the foreground are the coffee plantations and eucalyptus alleys with the light catching the wet leaves. You may ride on through the cool and shadowy plantations hardly touched by the sun. Then there will come a sudden gap, and you will look out from the half-darkness, and there in the sky will be the great head of the volcano again.

\* \* \* \* \*

One morning, remembering how beautiful had been the lake which I had seen from the top of Agua, I disturbed Colorada's fattening meditations and rode up over the shoulder of the volcano and down on the other side to Amatitlan, the town on the edge of the lake.

I found an inn. No one was interested to know who I was or what I did or whence I came. They tolerated my presence—barely that. I did not mind. Nor did it annoy me that they promised fodder for Colorada and brought none. An hour later as I crossed the town-square, laden with corn of my own provisioning, I was watched without surprise, shame, or resentment. It was only a symbol of what they were and how they did. The courtyard was a wilderness of flowers, like Eden after Eve had been forced to give up gardening. Throughout the inn everything that might have made for comfort and orderliness was turned to squalor and untidiness. Every room was like a grandfather's clock run down a generation ago. There is always that air about Spanish things: they have had a past.

Weary of the household with its hostile incuriousness, its bad food, its unkempt condition, I went out. The town was no better. Dirty pink and blue house-fronts, drink-shops, slovenly little stores full of low-grade odds and ends, dirt and

decay and indifference—it was all of a piece. Spanish decadence has not even vice to redeem it. It is as inactive as a rusted spring or a roof that has fallen in. Woe to the traveller in Spanish lands, if his artist-eye loses its sharpness! When mere decay has foregone its glamour, when the back aches from weeks in the saddle, and the stomach is vicious in its complaint of evil food, when the air is hot and heavy with rain, a Guatemalan town burns on his spirit like a fly in the sore of a horse's back.

I felt that I had endured enough of the wretched country. Cursing the streets through which I walked, I came out at the town's edge upon the grey-blue lake where the steep green volcanic slopes ended in a fairyland of trees with branches bent over to the mirror of windless water; and all my ill-humour went like a dream.

There is only one true magician in this world, one veritable wand of enchantment. There is no formula for the beauty with which she works. One can account for formal beauty in a measure, the mind can analyse its symmetries and relations; but the beauty of trees and winds and high hills and broad sunlight and running streams is sheer magic, working without reason by its mere potency. And because it is untamable to logic and explication, it is incommunicable to him who does

not feel it. A Spanish gentleman to whom I confided my love of riding the Guatemalan hills shrugged his shoulders. "Trees!" said he.

A path brought me up to a grassy shoulder high above the lake. Beyond, Agua was wreathing and unwreathing her head with cloud. The eastern volcanoes were driven deep with thunderstorm. Below was the intricate wonderland of trees in steep descent to the water. After all, thought I, it was not for the towns that I came to Guatemala.

And when I returned to the village I found that I could be as tolerant of its monstrous unworthiness as the Spanish law is tolerant of beggars and the Spanish houses of dirt.

Next day I rode up to Guatemala City. It was as I had feared: the civilisation was too advanced. Within a week I was off on my travels again, headed this time for Salvador. But that shall make my next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RIDING TO SALVADOR

THE scene is laid once more in mud and water. The only stage-mechanism is rain and thunder. The ox-carts go by, their great wheels sunken to the hubs, the oxen plunging and wallowing, the drivers nearly naked, knee-deep in the morass which was a road, prodding the oxen with pointed sticks, and shouting to each other, to the oxen, to God in heaven. The rain is nearly blinding. When the gust pauses, there are only earth banks on either side, crowned with the jaundiced leaf of the tree called Evil Herb. There is no glimpse of the country-side without; only the stretch of mud which the oxen have churned and the rain-curtained hedge like a line of vegetable soldiery to keep the traveller from taking in despair to the empty hills.

The anguish of riding is not easily described. There are mud-holes, unavoidable, and stretches which seem impassable. At times, with Colorada shoulder-deep and very frightened, we plunged and strained, only going on because it could not

be worse than returning. In other places travel lapsed to the rainy monotony of Kipling's elephants "in the sludgy squidgy creek." Then came renewed thunder and lightning in the hills accompanied by an unbelievable downpour. At any rate, one came to know how Augustus felt on that wild night of storm in the Pyrenees when the lightning struck close to his litter and his bearers floundered to their waists in mud. The anecdote is imperial, but the experience has little of regal dignity. The purpled emperor, if he fared like Colorada and me, must have been a pretty sight next morning. I felt like Max and Moritz just emerged from the baker's trough of dough, and Colorada must have felt still worse; for she had torn off half of a shoe and was rapidly going lame.

"But for to tellen you of his array,

His hors were goode, but he was nat gay."

It was a day of blank despond without human incident or cheer.

We find strange solace at such times. What Colorada may have found lies beyond mere human intuition. For myself, I have long ago forgotten the watery misery of body, yet I remember still the buzzards on the house-tops as I left Guatemala City in the early morning and the singing and flitting of brown and grey-green

birds among the lush woodland in the later afternoon. Like the long-winged sun-disks over ancient Egyptian doorways, the buzzards were holding out their pointed wings for the rising sun to dry. They were like the cranes in Hauff's marvellous fairy-tale. It was the same spirit of bird-solemnity touched for the spectator with grotesqueness and pathos and set by some eery fashion in a frame of ritual and magic. Great and ugly, they stood on the red gables, motionless, tip of beautiful wing almost touching tip of wing, like priests in mummery, facing the sunrise. As I rode on, the misty sun was annihilated in the sweep of clouds. But when I had passed the hill-ridges and slithered down roads which reversed all normal conventions of surface drainage, the sun once more illumined my grey and porcine career, and as I rode through the wet woods the birds came out, sleek and trim and jubilant, like the return of happiness after long misfortune. And of all that afternoon's countryside I remember only that there were occasional great oaks and pebbled crossings of shining brooks and, everywhere about me, bird-song.

At dusk I made a dirty down-at-the-heels pueblo in which a line of African huts gave way to a street of adobe shops and a couple of inns. That evening in the narrow public room five men

pounded a pair of marimbas into an unmannerly reverberation of a North-American tune. The closed doors were their sounding boards, and I their victim, too tired to escape. But it is sweet to share misery. Looking up I saw that half a dozen little green parrots were perched near the ceiling, blinking their eyes, martyred. Anyone could see that they were very, very wise, and (like most really wise folk) extremely unhappy. And that, said I, is like the scorn of omniscient eternity for the evil transiency of human art. But as I said it in English, the drunken deserter from Salvador went on shouting to me that when it came to a point of honour a subaltern should not hesitate to shoot his superior, and the *marimberos* continued to pound their devil's-anvil, and the plagued and sleepy birds on the rafter tried miserably to doze.

Through all my journey I was haunted by this implied comment of the bird-folk. In filthy courtyards walked the teal-like duck which they call the *pijiji*, and always he kept himself so trim and tidy amid the immundicity that the contrast ought to have penetrated even to those shameless races. Down in a Pacific port of the country, on another occasion, I watched the pelicans coming home along the lagoon. I had left the village in disgust of its two-storied balconied houses set crazily

upon piles on the narrow beach of dark volcanic sand. Inland, a row of tumble-down shanties on either side of a railroad track had brought the sense of a lifetime acquaintance during the heat of a single afternoon. A fairly white man in fairly white linen had crossed the track a couple of times before I discovered that he had only two steady points of call, both alcoholic, and that he was crossing from one to the other without other pause than the consumption of brandy exacted. Each trip became more hazardous than the preceding one for this human ferry for whom the straight line of steel rail must long since have abandoned its easy equation of the first degree, to revel in asymptotic curves and those more delirious forms familiar only to the mathematician and the drunkard. The end came at last. His foot, striving to overstep the elusive metal, found the barrier insurmountable. Soon he was lying on the open track in a stupor, his head bare to the blazing sun. The Indians passed and saw him with indifference. No one helped him, until a white woman found him and brought men to the scene. I left in disgust and sought the uninhabited shore.

The pelicans were coming home. Their large ungainly heads showed clear and sharp against the sky-line. They were soaring on their wide wings, splendid beautiful fliers, a delight for the

body-prisoned eye. Low over the surf came one, sailing without beat of wing under the smooth curl of the glassy wave and without effort just avoiding the white crash of falling water as the great wave broke. And I thought how I had but now seen a biped who could not so much as cross a railroad-track. Clearly the pelicans were the best blood in the place.

With the last of the birds the sun set behind the sea-line. Near by, the great surf under the rusted iron pier gradually took on phosphorescent lines in its broken depths, the lights shone in the cabin of the little freighter at anchor, and the stars came out. I walked back to the village. It was Saturday night and everyone was drunk.

I thought of all this through the din of the marimbas in Barberena, and the memory of that Pacific evening drove me out-of-doors in the hope of that silence which is so much more musical than sound. Colorada was still at supper. The light of a full Guatemalan moon flooded the littered yard. It was a time for nightingales. But it was well that there were none. The birds already had more than proved their superiority; and never had I felt it more keenly than that afternoon when the mule and I limped on our be-draggled way, mud-caked and heathen, while above us in the branches sang the glad clean

feathered folk. But I dared not communicate my impressions to any one; and as Colorada proved indifferent to anything except food, I debarred her from my recently-formed category of animals superior to man, and went to bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was in this part of the land that I encountered a coffee-planter whose Spanish proclaimed him a fellow-countryman of mine. Acquaintance turned to mutual liking, liking to hospitality, and hospitality to a three days' visit. We turned off from the Salvador highway and soon were riding through the dark solitude of evenly planted coffee-bushes. This plantation, said my new friend, belonged to a Belgian; and we would drop in on him, as our path led past his door.

There soon appeared a wooden house with broad verandahs and a general look of unkempt habitability. At the uproar of the dogs, the planter emerged, uncoated, voluble. We should stop, we should open a bottle of wine, we should have music. Red-faced and well-stomached, he poured forth his un-Parisian French like the gush of an oil-well newly liberated. He dragged us off our animals, and laughed at all we said. Schumann's Merry Farmer played with bouncing gusto would have been his musical embodiment. An hour later I knew that his wine was excru-

ciatingly sour, that his phonograph records were scratched and out of tune, that his house was in confusion, that his table-cloth was as coffee-stained as his shirt-front, that his house needed paint and his verandah repair, that his anecdotes were stupid and his gesticulations silly; but when I knew all that, I had been riding for half an hour, Belgian and *finca* had been left behind, and the whirl of chuckling riotous farewell had softened into the solitude of the dark bushes of berry-laden coffee. Dionysos never wrought more illusion out of pine-stick and ivy-spray and goat-skin sack than that Belgian whirlwind blowing amid his bottles of acid wine and disks of sour music.

"He's always like that," said my new friend. "My stomach is nearly ruined from having to pass this way."

\* \* \* \* \*

Colorada was freed, to rest her strained and shoeless leg. In perfect happiness she roamed an unscythed field; and seeing her, I could not help thinking of the great elder-tree with its flowers in Swinburne's poem, and of

"The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,

Naked, with hair shed over to the knee."

In the morning my friend loaned me a horse and

we started out to make an overseer's round. I called to Colorada as we rode by. Her long ears forward, she whinnied. Then, as intent as a mistress who sees her lover with another woman, she regarded me and my new mount in puzzled silence, until at last the fragrant grass at her feet recalled her to less speculative activities. I resent the sentimental ascription of human emotions to animals and I have no conviction that Colorada experienced any feelings during that tragic encounter: I confine my chronicle to her indubitable stare.

My friend complained much of the shiftless natives and their lazy unambitious ways. Still, after twenty years of it, the country jangled his nerves. We sought out a half-breed's cabin where a woman came to the door at our call. Her man, she said, had gone to Guatemala City to be cured.

"Yesterday," said my friend, the overseer, "you said he was too sick to leave his bed. How then could he walk forty miles to-day?"

To this there was no repartee; but "indeed, he had gone!"

"You tell him," said my friend, "that I am tired of his nonsense, and that as soon as he gets that matter of the boat fixed up he is to get to work again."

"Yes, sir," said the woman, at once admitting the point, "he is down attending to it now. I will tell him when he gets back."

We in the North lie stubbornly and resent detection. In the tropics they desert their lies as readily as they abandon their mistresses. "After all," they think, "what does it matter?"

So off we rode on our round of the plantation where the natives were hoeing out the weeds and banking the irrigation-ridges beneath the heavy shadow of the coffee-bushes. So rapid is the growth of weed that a fortnight turns the brown soil into a little jungle of undergrowth, and the hoe is never still.

We rode for a couple of hours with occasional plunges into great copses and water-cut chasms of rioting green. Here and there came a glimpse toward the great volcanoes on whom I had turned my back,—Fire and Water, and the Kettle, on whose slopes my friend had once seen the lava-streams blazing at night.

After a time we came to dirt mounds amid the coffee, a cluster of earthen barrows littered with numberless fragments of coarse pottery and with shards and splinters of obsidian knives. Here stood a stone some three feet square, carved to the likeness of a huge toad, with weatherworn face and limbs. Near by lay the broken head of an

idol with good Indian features of the Maya race. A line of beard ran from lower-lip to chin; an ornamental scroll variegated his ear. Authority and determination were still upon him, though his descendants of to-day have neither.

From the soil round about I picked up some small terra cottas, a grotesque demon-head mask with bird-beak nose, and a head most clearly and humorously pithecan.

When we returned to the plantation-house my friend produced an ancient jug of good black clay shaped in the guise of a well-fed townsman of that old Maya community, caressing with folded hands a portliness such as even Falstaff might have envied.

Indian sites are frequent in Guatemala, and much minor art is still to find. But the traveller needs a measuring-worm's methodical persistence; for even when the sites are close at hand he will hear of them not at all or by mere accident. Direct enquiry for them will be in vain, as the natives have never noticed them or are too indifferent to be bothered with showing the way. Money, it must be remembered, is not an effective instrument in the Spanish tropics.

\* \* \* \* \*

Regretfully I left the pleasant idleness of plantation life. I was given an Indian servant to

accompany me through the coffee-land back to the Salvador road. In the nearest town I presented Colorada with a shining set of new shoes and waited while she had them put on. It was afternoon before I got upon my way, and a dreary rain soon overtook me.

As I passed through the Indian villages, the sloping thatch dripped monotonously at the eaves, the brown mud splashed underhoof, and the fog hung in rainy festoons among the great trees overhead. There was no sound but the yapping of unfed dogs and the slapping of tortillas, varied by the fragmentary insanities of tame parrots. I saw no one. The rainy road led on, and the village was forgotten.

By supper-time I reached a town whose length of name ill agreed with the shortness of its streets. Entirely destroyed by earthquake a few years ago, Cuajiniquilapa lost its metropolitan headship of the department, its profusion of adobe houses, and a church which I should gladly have examined. Its dome had dinner-plates bedded in the mortar (like some of the churches on Ægean islands, I presume, or the monastery of St. Nicholas on the Island of Salamis). But the piece that crowned and closed the domical vault was not taken from table-ware, but borrowed from that equally useful nocturnal service which

it is not decent to name nor well-bred to insinuate. It is going too far to assume that even Nature was shocked and to explain the earthquake on grounds of her outraged delicacy,—even though it is characteristic of man in all ages to elevate the paltry misdeeds of his hand or tongue to causes for cosmic convulsions, so colossal is the conceit of his own accusing conscience! Yet if that is indeed the explanation, I can only regret that Nature passed judgment so hastily. Does not Browning's Pippa enjoin us that

“All service ranks the same with God?”

Among the new houses was one where strangers could be lodged, and there I revelled in fresh pineapple, whose taste alone repays a journey to the tropics. I have spoken little of Guatemalan fruits. Eating them is apt to be an acquired ability. The flavour of many is as indescribable as would be a new colour which had no kinsman in our spectrum. After all, mangoes taste so much like mangoes and so little like anything else in the world, that one can only say that they taste like mangoes. And if I add that papayas are very good if you happen to like them, I am only wasting a slice of printer's pie. But of pineapples all may judge by imagining the substitution of a warmly ripe and drippingly luscious fruit for that faintly flavoured pulp which we buy in our

northern markets, deluded by its barbaric exterior into the expectation of a pleasant dessert.

The house ran with dogs, miscellaneous in their pedigree. I even suspected an ornithic strain when I saw them begin to roost for the night. At dusk one took to a high bench; another slept on the dining-room table, to which he correctly ascended by way of a chair; while a third climbed with the utmost nonchalance and a considerable display of skill into the low-swung hammock. When, on retiring, I left the door ajar the cat came to share my rest and a fourth dog occupied the bed against the other wall. 'No doubt,' thought I, 'attentive observation of the "small fowles" saves them from rheumatism!'

I woke in the middle of the night to find that the rain had invaded the room and that the floor was well under water. Outside, the moon was struggling through the clouds. It was a scene whose rippling beauty was marred only by the unesthetic reminiscence that I had left my shoes in the path of inundation. The next morning the dog was still snoozing drily in his hammock and the water had disappeared. But the shoes bore witness that my vision was not the mere disorder of my dreams.

Colorada seemed ready for a day's work. So I saddled her in the sunrise and rode down a

long descent to the River of the Slaves, whose boulder-strewn flood of roaring dirty water is crossed by what may well be the oldest bridge in our western world. For it was built in 1589, and there are few things on our side of the Atlantic which can number a third of a thousand years. Some of the stones are new; but others may well be as old as the tablet on the crown of the span insists.

For a time the path led up the sandy river-valley, splashing among clear puddles and crossing little woodland streams, until the scenery lost its good-natured tranquillity and swung into the savage reaches of deserted hills. With the path winding up and up in the burning sun, it was long before the last of the valley was left behind. Looking back over the ragged tree-land, forty miles away I saw the familiar sugar-loaf hats of the great volcanoes and waved good-bye to them. As I crossed into the new watershed they vanished, and I came to the village of Azacualpa.

This was by origin a Spanish penal colony, and had an appropriately evil repute through all the country-side. In Azacualpa they would steal the tail off the mule while you were riding through. From every hand I had been warned to waste no time in that robber's nest. So I was dutifully shuddering and riding on, when such a burst of

thunderstorm overtook me that, to escape it, I would cheerfully have turned aside to play Faro with Captain Flint. Naturally, I found the people simple and kind and pleasant. The soldiers were willing to talk; the women insisted on feeding me eggs and bread and coffee. Even the dogs were friendly. Colorada, too, thought highly of the community, and I would have spent the night there; but hearing of a larger town some ten miles further on, I set out again in a heavy fog which failed to lift. I must have made poor progress; for when I slipped below the cloud-line into an open valley-basin it was sunset. Dusk came on in the uninhabited fields. Then came darkness and rain and I abandoned the helm to the four feet of a surer navigator than myself. For having left the high road in the hope that a short-cut would bring me to Quesada in time, my only reward was now the dim form of an unmeaning hedge close at hand and the provoking distant twinkle of an unknown light. It was the first and last time that darkness was to catch me on the road.

Left to her own mulish devices Colorada gratefully lapsed into that speed whose ideal she shared with tortoises and snails. Lights appeared, sudden as cloud-uncovered stars, and they were close at hand. Then came a turn, a sharp

descent, and the black rush of a bridgeless river; and all the lights had vanished. Poor Colorada was unanimously in favour of remaining on the hither shore, until my spurs overruled her last objections and she waded out into the invisible swirling current. By good luck the stream was swifter than it was deep and we struck the notch in the opposite bank where the road continued. In five minutes more we were in the town; and soon Colorada was eating a lampless dinner of corn-stalks in the Municipal Stables, while I, supperless and a trifle wet from the river, slept in my clothes on the bench of the Court of Justice.

I awoke in the black hours of the night to discover that somebody was trying to saddle a mule in the middle of the floor. When he had finished, he roused the roomful of Indian constabulary for fear that they had failed to become aware of his departure, shook hands with each and every one of them, then climbed on his mule and rode through the doorway into the pelting rain. Torches were extinguished, candles blown out, and sleep resumed, when the night-watch entered, announced that it was raining too hard for military service, and began an endless conversation in the course of which I fell asleep once more and missed all but the last part of their narrative.

This I woke to hear at a time when a grey light was breaking through the chinks of the wall, gradually transforming the shapeless bundles on the floor to brown bare legs and snoring bodies of half-breed Indians.

In the unexaggerating light of a breakfastless dawn the Municipal Stables looked astonishingly like an ordinary dirty back-yard and the Courts of Justice like a small unfurnished room with brick-tile floors and drab walls. However, as my hotel-bill was four cents American, it would be worse than ungrateful for me to spoil the illusion of those stately names.

Would no one give me coffee? Perhaps the Chinaman who kept the store around the corner, or even the Frenchman across the square. The square had some of the geometric properties appropriate to that figure, but was otherwise indistinguishable: the Frenchman was in bed. I made a discourse on the traditional friendship of our two countries and ordered his native wife to prepare me some coffee. The sun came up in barbaric splendor, the coffee was hot, and the Frenchman sent a message from between the blankets, to the effect that he had always esteemed my country highly and that the price would be ten cents. While I was paying, a dishevelled woman came over the hill-top of the square like a blown



"IDOLS" OF COPAN, HONDURAS



bush before a tornado. She made for the soldiery, by whom she was instantly enveloped. Like flails on a threshing floor, her arms waved above the encompassing crowd. She was in tears and in anger. May classic Castile forgive her the jargon she was talking! I understood not a single word, and the soldiers would not tell me what she said. But they pacified her; and she withdrew like a burned-out meteor from my horizon.

It was time to start. So I saddled Colorada and, after replying to usual enquiries by an unusually clear explanation of a New York office-building and a rough comparison of the population of that city and Quesada, I rode off through the fields thankful that I had crossed the river on the previous evening ahead of the heavy rain.

I had only a short ride before me. It was Sunday, dedicate to God and brandy, a bad day for extensive travel. Wherefore I was content to reach Jutiapa before noon and to rest.

As I entered the town a bare-foot and un-uniformed soldiery was returning from rifle-practice. Before them, like a wounded comrade upon a stretcher, the painted figure of a wooden man was being carried back in triumph to the dis-strains of a band. Set up against the bleak hillside, he had been the wretched scapegoat of his tribe. Now

even in death his bland face was drawn to an archaic smile, his vapid eyes stared patiently toward heaven. Poor bullet-ridden eidolon! Did the rifles really tremble less and the bullets go straighter because that ragged soldiery felt the thrill of his illusion and almost could make itself believe in him as a thing of blood and bone? And what greyest remnant of savage Baldur or Adonis was there in that processional carrying-home of the god whom they had slain? Was there none at all, just because they were themselves aware of none?

It was the feast of St. Christopher. From the white-washed church came a strange procession. Two boys in brilliant carmine led the way with cross and candlestick. Behind them strode ten knights, fresh from the fairyland of an impromptu pantomime. Their stockings were forget-me-not pink-and-blue. Cloth-of-gold at a penny a yard made brave work of their uppers. Their heads wore pointed magician-hats set with tiny flashing mirrors. A drum and one fife made music, a sort of Farmer Helvig's Spring-dance, whose crudely accentuated beat always seemed (but was not) out of rhythm. The ten remnants of chivalry danced with crossing of brown feet and of wooden swords. Behind came an armful of rockets, whose feeble skyward rush was

meant to enliven every halt. Then came two festival floats, set-pieces of wire-frame and coloured paper, mounted on kitchen tables whose unromantic limbs were buried in artificial flowers such as even the fertile jungle-lands could never have evolved. The superstructures delved in that realm of childish splendor dear to the southern Roman Catholic and the country-kitchens of our chromolithographic North. One showed St. Christopher with pretty Christchild on his shoulders, fording through gigantic begonias. The other was a waxen saint with girlish mien and dresses. Pink and blue flowers made her paradise and supported her enthusiastic motto, "Long live St. Christopher!" She was carried by Indian women, and a little girl walked beneath the table, as though under a flowering canopy. The rockets blew themselves to smoky bits, the fife whistled and wheezed, the swords clashed in wooden fervor as the mimers danced their stately step. It was a real festival, and St. Christopher could not have helped being pleased.

In the inn doorway I found a demure little three-year-old, sitting stark-naked on the threshold and dipping his fingers into a large plate of black-bean mush. Some vague reminiscence of Sartor Resartus suggested the young Carlyle with his plate of porridge, and the confusion of the

two pictures was so ludicrous that the little fellow looked up with a puzzled friendly face to see why the stranger was laughing. On the walls of the room behind him were some frescoes clearly belonging to the undiscovered school of Guatemalan Primitives, and to these I diverted my amusement. But the woman of the house saw only that I had laughed at her child and her paintings, and I had to abandon my intellectualised perversions to make my peace with the real world of human things. There seems to be nothing so ubiquitously rude as a laugh unshared or a smile not understood. The grave unsmiling savage is well on his way toward being a gentleman; and a sense of the ludicrous is the root of ill-breeding.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next day before sunrise I started on the last stretch of my journey. The Indians were coming to market, stringing out across the almost treeless plain. All had the one question,—“How is the river?” I had crossed it with my feet tucked up on Colorada’s neck and having managed to keep dry could not help being optimistic. Yet it must have been no small matter for the old women with their heavy baskets on their heads to wade through the swirl of the rain-swollen stream. But if I lied to them, I lied as the Spaniards often do, out of kindness and a desire to please; and

for that, I hope they left the stranger's memory uncursed when they stepped down to the foam and muddy roar of their dreaded Tamasulapa.

It was a countryside such as meets one everywhere in Greece,—a stony grey-green plain shut in by unforested hills with a merciless splendor of light to make its barrenness attractive. In the dry season the brown earth must split open in numberless cracks and the dust lie like a desert-mantle on every leaf and twig. But in rainy August it was almost verdant. The air was fresh and cool, and the mist travelled along the hill-tops with shadowy promise of further down-pour.

It was a long and steep ascent, past some fantastic rock-castles of century-long erosion not unlike those natural towers on which the Thessalian monks built their unapproachable monasteries. At the top of the ridge there were trees once more and glimpses backward over the wide reaches of upland plain and lowland jungle. Then came a delightful woodland way, level and wind-blown, and a zigzag plunge from the far-seeing ridge down to a town buried like an English village in the shadow of immemorial trees.

I found a girl standing in an open doorway, and persuaded her to take pity on my hunger. Though I had nothing devised upon my banner,

my apprehension of the shades of night and my eagerness to be gone reduced our behavior to the inanity of the poem. What wonder that when the maiden actually uttered her "Oh, stay, and rest," I was terribly embarrassed lest my bright blue eye should continue the romantic tradition? However, we fell to arguing, myself insisting that I must cross the frontier before nightfall and she maintaining that it was not possible to ride twenty-five miles that afternoon. She was wrong in that, and I should have proved her so, had it not been that a black storm came over the hill-tops at three o'clock and blustered me into putting up for the night in the shabbiest little border-village that ever crept upon a map. I translated my passport with appropriate grandiloquence to the commandant of the lounging barefoot soldiery and received his permission to do what I liked. I soon found that this was an inexpensive generosity, and that the sheik had presented me with the freedom of the desert. My dinner was the eternal triad,—black beans, tortillas, and coffee. My bed was an unyoked ox-cart in the village square. Two wandering Indians whom I had overtaken and left behind in the early afternoon arrived at nightfall, and, building a tiny fire beside me, cooked a pinch of coffee in a little tin from their pack. From the same source appeared cold tortillas to be

toasted on sticks. When the little blaze had smouldered and died, they rolled up in their blankets and slept on the ground. Food and sleep were to them an emotionless ritual, performed with the silent vast intensity of the pyramids of Gizeh. Beneath my cart a sow took quarter for the night until I disputed with her the justness of her assumed prerogative of using my bed for a scratching-post. One cannot sleep through quakes, be they volcanic or merely suilline.

It was a night of brilliant stars. In the half-illumination of the midnight sky the black cone of Chingo stood above me, fit staging for a phantom play. The warm air was vaguely sweet with tropic perfume. To drift off into slumber in such a world was a touch of Elysian content.

Was it not a retired seaman who gave orders to be roused in the early morning with the message that the admiral desired his presence? So much more did he relish his protracted slumber when after his invariable "Tell the admiral to go to Hell," he sank back between the covers! I had the same delicious sense of slumbering off a dozen times into the tropic night, only to be snatched back into the unpleasantness of the conscious world. For a dozen people passed along the road from the frontier. The dogs barked,

first in the distance, then close at hand. Finally a black shadow stole across the open. Thereat a soldier, idling under cover at the opposite side of the square, emitted a bawl that must have been audible half a mile away. The bamboos heard it, the prowlers drinking at the midnight stream heard it, the great trees tried to stifle it, the hill-cliffs re-echoed it; how much more did I on my ox-cart and Colorada at her hitching-post suffer from that interminable sentence which involved *inter, alia* an exhortation not to go further, a command to traverse the square, and an intimation that the commandant's representative would be interested in inspecting the traveller's papers! . . . all because a soldier was too lazy to cross the square and stand guard on the road-side.

I was content to leave before dawn and to continue down the narrow stream which had brought me out of the highlands. In and out of its bed we splashed. "And when you have crossed it the third time," had said the owner of my night's lodging-place, "you will be in Salvador." It was like the brooks in Looking-glass Land, where an action apparently quite trivial and irrelevant was followed by momentous consequences. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

So I was in Salvador! And this was no longer Guatemala, this rocky path and washed-out track,

or this familiar mud through which we floundered! Yet it looked the same for a while. But at length I came out on green treeless hillocks, dead volcanoes clothed in emerald, so smooth of slope that one could wish to see a gigantic hand reach out to stroke that shimmering velvet. It is an effect peculiar to volcanic regions. The Alban hills near Rome have a little of it; and there is a hint of it around Naples. But Italy is too dry and arid to give those slopes their proper green. In Salvador it makes an unending pastoral tranquillity. I knew indeed that I was in another land.

By eleven in the morning I had ridden twenty-five miles despite of some of the most distressing mud that Colorada's flanks had yet encountered; and I was back once more among streets and houses, where there were people who had seen London and Paris, who knew that Europe had been at war and could feel the pity of it. For the first time, Colorada lived in a real hotel and was waited on by other menials than her master. The town was Santa Ana, and there for the first time in many weeks I looked on the face of someone whom I could call a friend, a fellow-being in the same ancient Aryan civilisation in which mules and Mayas have no share.

## CHAPTER V

### DON QUIXOTE'S RANCH

IT is only another instance of man's inveterate self-complacency that he cheats the powers of darkness by claiming rest for Paradise and yet calling unrest divine. For my own part, in Salvador I was more inclined to credit Satan with the invention of both; for while I thought that travel was diabolic, I found inactivity to be the very devil. Colorada fattened in her stall, as though her indifferent ears heard no far blowing of mountain-winds and singing of woodland birds. For hers was a wooden and unregenerate soul; and I have little doubt that in her next incarnation she will be a fencepost. But to me the days brought only uneasiness. Beyond the town roofs I could see the hills, and I would think of the rocks and woods where ran the trails—places of birds and shadows and hilltop views. One afternoon suddenly I saddled Colorada and rode away.

Heading north on the highroad, we came near sunset to a village without an inn. In the local providence there was no provision for strangers;

but I found an old couple who were willing to receive that ill-assorted pair of fellow-travellers, an American man and a Guatemalan mule. Of the two, the American was the better-bred; for the Guatemalan broke at midnight from her tether and allayed her curiosity with an inspection of the town. I guarantee that she found nothing to reward her ambulations and that I learned as much as she by lying on a cot and listening to two old men mourn for the golden past.

"What young man is there to-day," said one, "to whom you could point as representing the old manhood of Teixistepeque? Not one!"

"It is all gone," said the other, "morality, honesty, industry! The young men—what are they? Shiftless, unthinking, good-for-nothing."

"It did not use to be so," said the former. "Teixistepeque in our day—that was a village! A bit of the true Salvador, the free Salvador! The world is growing evil."

"Yes, the world is growing evil. The men of to-day . . ."

The old illusion!

I was tempted to tell them what their next sentence was to be. (It is all written out in Greek and Latin books of two thousand years ago.) But the prophecy would have failed; for a young boy and a girl entered the house at that moment,

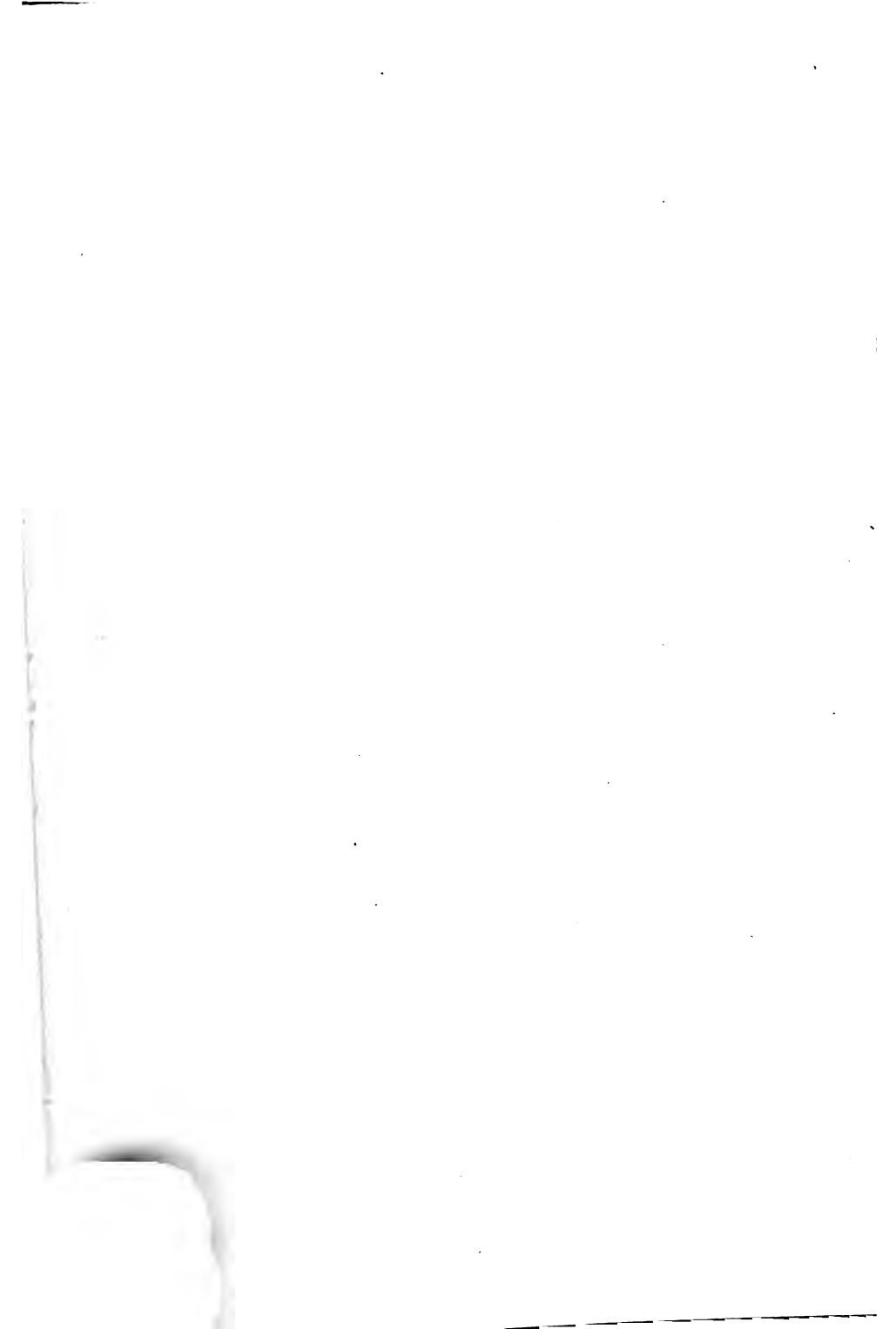
and the cheerfulness of youth cut short the grey-beards' threnody. The whole party fell to telling marvellous fables, amid whose unimaginative and preposterous involutions my sleepy senses soon lost themselves, to slip from a candle-lit peasant-room into a blessed land void of Spanish words or Indians or twelve-league rides to dirty towns. But at daybreak I woke to all of these.

The old man went to his work in the fields in the cold mist of sunless glimmer and the old woman made me coffee. I saddled Colorada and set out. From a cool and sleepy road of trees the path emerged into the open among volcanic mounds and grassy cones. Grazing horses stood out like phantom mares on the strangely peaked sky-line above. The ride promised to be interesting. But volcanoes and horses were left behind, the air lost its morning freshness, and the path led for hours through hot open country. Except for occasional strings of mules, heavy-laden and despondent, coming down to Santa Ana from the mines of the hill-country beyond, there was nothing of interest except a great lake whose windless silver stretched off to the low ranges of the Guatemalan frontier. Then came the roaring of a river, which Colorada heeded less than I. Little did she know in her mulish innocence that the river which she had twice crossed at Jutiapa on her way

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THE THICKET, QUIRIGUA



to Salvador had swung north to intercept her once again, swollen now by all the streams of the Jalapa highlands. Mules do not cross rivers until they come to them (nor always even then), and I envied Colorada's indifference to the roar of the white rapids beside which we rode. In the end there was (as though by miracle) a bridge of solid stone, luxury undreamed, *deus ex machina* to our little difficulties.

On the other side of the bridge the road at once entered deep forest filled with tropical growth and life. The path was a-flutter with brilliant butterflies, and there were lizards galore and new kinds of birds. Colorada, the unæsthetic, noticed only that she had become the sudden prey of huge flies which I slaughtered assiduously on her bleeding neck and flanks. But the swarms, like all else, passed, and we emerged from the deep wonderland to catch sight of the broken cone of an old volcano and a succession of sunken lakes, dead craters rain-filled and edged with trees. Beyond a larger lake we shortly came to the town of Metapan, and there I lunched, and idled away the remnants of the hot and radiant afternoon.

When I stole out in the grey dawn, next morning, I left the inn unobserved and unspeeded; but Colorada, unsusceptible to furtive as to other emotions, transformed tip-toeing to a clatter of

hoofs upon the deserted streets. In the village square a dreamy sentinel blinked at me without comment; the clock in a square tower (built placidly in front of the very center of the church-door) struck the half-hour; a lonely figure dodged across the streets ahead of me and slipped like a shadow through a dark doorway. Mist swam in the leaves of the great trees and blurred the red ridges of the roofs. There was no wind and little light. The town seemed a graveyard. But Colorada, being void of apprehensions, communicated her indifference to me. Without haste we passed out into a countryside of dripping thickets. A misty range of eastern mountains flanked us like a wall, over which there shortly appeared the red face of the sun. Across these ridges lay my day's journey; but as the crests seemed more than three thousand feet above, I had little hope of riding the needful forty miles through that bristling land. An arch Ionian pessimist once hailed Thasos with much the same despair,—

“Like a donkey's spine it stands  
Abristle with savage wood.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I have never seen a desert-mirage, that shifting city of pinnacles and minarets whose margin fades; but I have learned to appreciate the baffled temper of the caravans. Riding for Esquipulas,

I interrogated man, woman, and child, always with the one question of distance yet to go. I felt toward their answers as the Hellenes to the Thracian tongue: "'Tis the chitter of swallows," said those good-natured and contemptuous speakers of Greek. And chitter of swallows might have been those answers along the road.

"It is ninety miles," said one, "and you will be there to-morrow night."

"Over those hills," said another, "and then it is only a short piece to ride."

At times I was a dozen leagues from my goal, only to hear of it floating behind the nearest woods. Toward noon I became interested in the town of Concepcion. When it actually came into view among the trees, a real human village shut in with the homely sound of running water, I felt that I had performed as impossible a feat as though I had stumbled upon the rainbow's pot-of-gold. Pot-of-earth, it seemed, there was none; for I could find nothing cooking on the hearths of the villagers, and rode on in my chimeric search for Esquipulas. It was a district of mines, upland ventures of foreign capital scarring the hills with the marks of that one quest which all mankind can understand. I had expected to run into countrymen of my own; but the mines lay off the main track and my day's goal was nebulous

still. On those high hills of the gods, the shirt-sleeved young engineers curse the tropics and their loneliness, reviling the shiftless race whose labor will not serve. Not for them are the great shadows above clear streams in those wild valleys, the broken falls of sheer earth above them, and from colored ridges the far views toward volcano-crowned horizons. God, it seems, made the world to be lived in, not to be looked at. So the Indians sweat or lie indolent; the white men drink away the damnable solitude; the trees and flowers grow and die under blowing winds and falling rains; and only the sentimental journeyers delude themselves with empty contemplation.

It was late afternoon. From water-eaten ridges I slid into a new valley and rode out on a high tongue of land. To right and left the ground fell away into deepening gullies that led to the broad green valley-plain beyond; but my path kept level as though on an earth-built causeway into space. In all the land beneath, there was no town. Esquipulas, the Mecca of New Spain, seemed as elusive amid these hills as ever the Grail-castle was to the questing knights. I wondered what I had come to see, whether the Black Christ and the shining towers were not a new-world phantasy of pious minds; and while I wondered, suddenly there was the town at my

feet, red rambling roofs in a long straight line and the yellow dome and white walls of a great church, conspicuous and splendid, like the clustered buildings of a lonely lighthouse in the grey-purple sea of waning day.

The artist chooses at pleasure from the world of his experience, wise in his eliminations. If only Memory were an artist, too! Our past might be like a pleasant landscape; our friends, portraits; our disillusionings dropped from the canvas. Then Esquipulas would have been only that company of red roofs marching to a white-towered temple, toward which I descended in a sheer plunge from a sunset ridge into the gathering dusk of the valley-floor. But the spirit of remembrance is a cross-grained and malicious demon with little sense of form, content to jumble together all the arbitrary and distorted elements which he chooses to find significant. Esquipulas, thanks to that Mephistophelian spirit, is for me a futurist composition, wherein are thrown *inter alia* an earnest woman, pineapples, a red tin-flag in front of a butcher-shop, the cracked keystone of a bridge, five naked children sitting in the gutter, an open bake-oven glowing and crackling, an Indian spitting, five brandy-booths, an enormous armful of mule-fodder, a raw egg without cup or spoon, and a row of nettles waving in the moon-

light. And what can a writer do with such a memory, or such a world?

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There was no inn in Esquipulas. By advice of the soldiery I begged for quarters from a pious widow, and was given stable-room for Colorada and not unsimilar lodging for myself. Walls, a ceiling, a floor; these the room had. But I felt that it had acquired those members *e definitione* rather than by any active interest of its own. Luckily there was a cot available. Food there was none for man or beast; but I soon came back somewhat as Macduff's soldiery from Burnham wood, looking like a moving corn-field of green stalks. For my own consolation I ended up in the back of a wretched brandy-shop where I ate black-beans and tortillas by shifting candlelight in a sooty bake-room which might have been a charcoal-burner's dream of the Inferno. There I was pestered by the sore-eared carcass of a dog more hungry even than myself, and annoyed by the proximity of women whose clothes seemed to be rotting on their backs. Nor is the picture over-drawn.

On my return to the house the widow was waiting.

"One question," said she.

And when I had expressed my readiness, "I

am religious," she said; "but what about you?"

Now, I never answer that question very brilliantly. Perhaps I suspect it of belligerency. I hold that it should be marked "Beware of the Badger!" However, that evening I was religious too; and all went well until, in an unguarded moment, I admitted my Protestantism. Then came storm. For half an hour I swallowed dogma, denied heresy, and acclaimed all the saints in general, but most especially Our Lord of Esquipulas, for whom I evolved a considerable enthusiasm. When a man has ridden a mule close on fifty miles he may be permitted a conversion to Baal or Moloch if they be masters of his bed and blankets. (Primitive religion is rather of that sort anyway, and a tired man is apt to be primitive.)

Mollified, but only half content, the local champion of Catholicism allowed me to remain beneath her roof. But the ordeal continued, as she proceeded to be religious in a neighboring room and involved the rest of her household in song. Now, it is a strange thing that we forgive Nature for being out of pitch, but not mankind. A flatted piety brings only its author nearer God. The civilized world must have its religion and its esthetics concordant; and it is generally only serving-maids and men-of-business who can fall

victim to the unsensitive tactics of revivalism. But I was patient. Next morning the widow came again, to announce that I could not remain, since her house was for Catholics and not for heretics.

I was tired of the whole dispute.

"One question," said I, and like herself on the previous evening proceeded to ask a number.

"Have you been to Rome where the pilgrims go? No? *I* have been to Rome.

"Have you seen the great church where the Pope lives? No? *I* have seen that church.

"Have you seen the Pope, God's vicar here on earth? No? *I* have seen God's vicar.

"I am a holy man," I said; and left her.

When I returned an hour later, I found that a chair had been added to the furnishings of my room.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mecca of Spanish America, shrine of the black image of Christ, town of the January pilgrims encamped around the white walls and yellow dome of a great and solitary church,—small wonder that I was eager to come there and to see it with my own eyes. In the daylight I found half a mile of straight street, lined with low houses of stuccoed mud. Three squatting Indians were selling pineapples. They named their price in silver

of Salvador, I agreed in currency of Guatemala, and paid them with Honduranian coin, leaving the three of them in helpless dispute. The first maintained that I had cheated them, the second that they had cheated me, the third that neither had cheated the other. (This last was clearly a pessimist confirmed.) But as they had dedicated their lives to reconciling these three currencies, I felt that an outsider could teach them nothing, clutched my pineapples, and went to explore the church. There it stood, white and high at the end of the vista of straight street and dirty house-fronts, with a tower-flanked façade whose receding stages recalled the peaked front of Dutch houses in spite of the inevitable classic orders and baroque scrolls of the Spanish tradition. The four corner-towers themselves in receding stories, passed from square through octagon to a tiny crowning cupola. In the center was a dome covered with lemon-coloured tile. For the rest, every inch had been whitewashed with such ardor that the saints in their niches were bundled up in a dozen coats of paint and looked like dough-sculpture floured and ready for the Christmas oven.

Before the entrance was a platform of red brick, and there on every tile pious pilgrims had scratched the outline of their soles. Large feet

and small, initialed or uncommented, they were there by the hundreds, footprints of those that had stood at the door of our black Lord of Esquipulas.

I entered, to find the interior large and bare. Whitewashed piers carried the usual barrel-vault of the nave. At the crossing the cupola broke the dull and heavy ceiling-lines with pierced drum and with painted evangelists on the four pendentives. The floor was of red brick tile and innocent of bench or chair or any encumbrance of comfort. Paintings hung on the piers of the nave and gaudy paper flags from the impost-cornice above. Along the side walls stretched a line of gilded tabernacles for the gentle and highly colored waxen saints. The rest was whitewash.

Yet when the Indian women knelt on the bare floor with their bright shawls across their shoulders and beyond them the acolytes in red waved the incense, though the dimmest eye would have been outraged by the colours and the dullest ear by the sounds, there was something in the strange blending of emotions to mark and to remember. The sacring-bell rang, an altar-shade rolled up, and there behind glass was the Black Image, for native eyes so miraculous, so sacrosanct, so mystical, the tremor of whose presence

ran visibly through the brilliant shawls of the kneeling women. Whitewash and tinsel,—tinsel and whitewash: yet I am half-ready to believe that our Lord of Esquipulas can in truth work his miracles there.

Nevertheless, his fame and his power are slowly fading. There is still fiesta from New Year's to Mid-January; but the crowds, they say, are less, and the great floor no longer seethes with worshippers coming and going. In mid-summer when I saw it, the long street of houses, beginning with its brandy-shops, stretched desolately away from the steps of the church. A cynic might claim that there was still ample spiritual elation; but a handful of drunken go-to-meeting Indians is a poor substitute for the festivals that once were held when the Black Christ of Esquipulas gathered his pilgrims from furthest Mexico and Panama.

In the course of the day, in a little church, I found a legend stencilled on linen, setting forth in gruesome detail the anti-Catholic laws in force in England "since 1535." Those old religious persecutions make sorry reading; but what of a priesthood of to-day that uses such means to defame an opposing creed? No doubt, then, the widow was persuaded that I, on my native soil, turned my energies to fining, whipping, and

quartering loyal Catholics; and does it not speak for her hospitality that I was not secretly murdered during the night?

Murdered, however, I was not; and next morning by candle-light I stumbled upon Colorada sleeping on her side. By candle-light she ate her dried corn and by candle-light she was saddled and exhorted. I pushed the house-door wide and rode into the empty village-street. The first dawn explored the chinks between the paving-stones and felt with forlorn fingers for the dirty walls of the houses. Outside of the town it was not better. Water oozed on the meadows and the damp wind blew fog-wisps in dreary dances. But after a time came sunrise ahead over ragged hills, bloody and barbaric as blowing trumpets; and behind, across the plain, the white towers of our Lord of Esquipulas slowly grew out into the commonplace of day.

There seemed to be little or no path. Some cowherds offered me fresh milk and gave me instructions. For a while a little barefooted half-breed trotted along ahead of me, the only guide whom I ever persuaded into my service in Guatemala. There were frequent streams, all moving across my way to reach the River Lempa on its southward course through Salvador to the Pacific. By mid-morning I reached the hills and crossed

the low watershed of the continent into a wild steep valley where all the waters turned to the other ocean. Beyond were the blue frontier hills of Honduras.

It was a scene full of unfriendliness. Around me were low ridges, bristly and unkempt. The path slipped down the steep valley-head in rocky zigzags over the stony shelves of pine to the more fertile shadows of the bed below. Here and there I thought that I could distinguish the thatch of a hut; but there was no other sign of life. Of birds and beasts there were none. I could look down the long valley to the near forests of green and the far hills of blue and know that no one would see us nor tend us nor feed us as we wandered our twenty remaining miles to the village of Copan. Honduras seemed a true land of the free in which the individual is at liberty to go where he likes, without guide or path, to sleep in the open, starve without hindrance, and lose his way without help. For once I was utterly my own master. What wonder that I twice missed my way and all that day had nothing to eat? As I rode downstream I sank deeper and deeper into the lowlands. The trees grew higher, the underbush grew thicker, till I could no longer see beyond my immediate path. Losing the track I rode aimless trails; but in the end I reached the right ford of

the right river, and crossed with the swift water up to the saddle, only to find a blank hedge of jungle beyond the pebbled shore. Peasant piety in European lands is glad to credit the devil with all that is unusual in nature; but there is nothing truly diabolic in Devil's Bridges and Witches' Kitchens. They lack that sinister touch of the intellectual, that malicious and painstaking be-devilment which is the true caste of Mephisto. Not so a re-entrant ford of a flooded stream. The trick is apparent—a ricoché from bank to island and island to bank will carry one upstream or down in zigzag progression. But from where I stood I could see a foaming shingle above me and another one below, and there was nothing to tell me which to choose. The high water had washed away all earlier hoof-marks, and it was soon apparent that no one but myself had crossed the river that day. The jungle screen was placid and without expression, ready to crowd me off into deep water.

Since my map told me nothing I chose at random and crossed an arm of the stream to the island above; and there found track of hoofs. Recrossing from the upper end of the shingle to the mouth of a tributary stream, here and there on a shallow or shelf of sand I found the same hoofmarks leading inland, and judged that in dry

weather the path ran where now the red mud swirled. But I met no one until the path emerged from the stream and struck through thick bush to a little clearing. There I learned that the true passage of the ford was downstream; and back I rode down the swirl of red water, to do four zig-zag river-crossings before I reached the road at last.

It reads quietly and pleasantly; but the little drama does not act so well. We of the North, for example, never understand why the Sicilian Greeks used to engrave a man-headed bull on their coins when they wished to represent a river. To be sure, a bull roars and plunges and destroys; but we do not guess how that grey trickle through a bed of stones which so disappointed us in our visit to classic lands can do the same. Overnight it may change to a red and raging animal that foams and bellows.

At one point Colorada was swept off her feet; but though she lost her bodily, she kept her mental poise, and came bravely ashore under wet saddle and saddle-bags with blowing nostrils and a wondering eye.

We had lost our chance of reaching Copan. Instead, after half an hour, coming out on a large lonely rancho, I turned in and applied for shelter. The women-folk received me hospitably and gave

me black beans and tortillas with the usual explanation that there was nothing else in the house. They themselves, as far as I saw, ate nothing.

At sunset the ranchero appeared, a gaunt, grim, bespectacled old man riding a gaunt grim steed. His head was wrapped voluminously in a large towel. He rode slowly, like one in a dream, without evident aim or interest. Seeing me, he greeted me with courtesy, but paid me no further attention. Afoot, he moved like a lank ghost: I looked to see whether there was flesh beneath that turban towel. He entered and I did not see him again that evening; but in the early dawn he rode off with the same swaying listless motion, his head wrapped in the towel, and disappeared slowly into the deep woods.

The whole farm was Quixotic. The large empty house, the aimless inmates who neither toiled nor fed, the absence of any apparent means of livelihood gave an eerie impression of desolation and self-forgetfulness. There were no children in the house; and when I asked the women I learned that the old knight-of-the-towel was the last of his line. Owning large stretches of land which he could not cultivate and cattle which he could not tend, he saw himself growing old and feeble and the great farm gradually dying with the dying of his clan. Neither children nor



grandchildren sustained him nor took over his cares. From habit he looked after his cattle; but his horse had grown old with its rider, and neither could have covered more than a few miles each day.

I wondered why he had not bidden farewell and decided that he must have forgotten that I was in his house; but when I wished to pay the women, I heard that the ranchero had ordered them to accept nothing: 'he wished me to feel that I was his welcome guest.' And that, amid poverty, was Quixotic, too. There was no one to feed Colorada, and the Indian woman sulkily asserted that there was no fodder. But I searched around, found bran and maize, and gave Colorada plenty; then I saddled her without comment and rode away. So is hospitality requited when a mule must be fed.

With the shutting in of the trees and the vanishing of the farm I felt as though I had read, rather than encountered, that experience of the old ranchero on his broken horse, that I had never seen him in truth, but had dreamed of Don Quixote and Rosinante and imagined a Quixotic setting for them on the frontierland of Honduras.

The path led over hot straggling hills. Once, at a cool and shadowy brook, there was a giant ceiba-tree with its peculiar sharp-edged roots and

its great branches. Otherwise there was little to note until I came to a sugar-mill, where the cane was being pressed between revolving cylinders of steel while the sap was smoking and boiling in large open vats, tended by Indians armed with perforated ladles and scoops. The machinery was made in Ohio, U. S. A.

I was told that the Copan had been unfordable for nearly a week and that Colorada would have to stay on the hither shore. Riding down to the river, I found the forecast true. Great masses of reddish brown were foaming and roaring down the swollen bed, and though I should have liked to take the chances of swimming, I knew that the natives were right. Returning to the mill, I left Colorada entranced with the faint sweetness of the pressed cane and crossed on foot by the swinging wire-bridge to the village of Copan.

There I found the apothecary composing verses for a birthday wreath. He was reading them to the general grocer for criticism and approval. After a few minor changes, both agreed that they were very good. I could not identify the metre, but liked some of the words, and bought a bottle of beer and a pineapple. After that I went to see the alcalde, who informed me that the Honduran government imposed a tax on visitors for the upkeep of the antiquities, and suggested five dol-

lars gold as the correct amount. Fortunately I was able to display my wealth in Guatemalan paper (which was quite worthless in Honduras) and my poverty in current silver. The Honduranian Government thereupon lowered its impost; but to no purpose. Finally the said Government, noting my professional capacity and casual intentions, and discouraged at my insolvency, saw fit to remit entirely the revenue for the upkeep of the antiquities, and gave me a barelegged escort, for which I was tempted to thank the said Government in behalf of the learned and literary professions which I represented and the nationality to which I belonged. Thereupon I requested the escort to look lively, as I was hungry, and promised it twenty cents if it fulfilled its office to my satisfaction. The escort collected its knife, and we started.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are numerous accounts of the antiquities of Copan, and with these I have no ambition to contend.

The idols and ruined courts are a memorable sight, if only because they stand so desolate and overgrown. Though I had come on purpose to see them, the setting seemed so unlikely that the surprise of the unexpected was not altogether dissolved. One would as soon look for the pyra-

mids of Sakkhara in the plains of Dakota as for these splendid relics of a great civilisation amid the unlettered peasantry of the Honduranian woods. The tall stones, carved in the overprofusion of early decorative art with priest-kings in ritual dress, with faces and manikins and involved demon limbs, have enough of the proud endurance of everlasting things. So that one needs neither sentiment nor fantasy to feel the spell of that unkempt hillside with its treasure of more than a thousand years.

It was very hot, and the tangle of undergrowth made progress difficult and slow. If one would study the ruins, one can learn more from looking at the books of Stephens or Maudslay than by travelling to Central America. I learned nothing, yet I gained an unforgettable memory; even as those who go to Athens find that they already knew more about the Parthenon than ocular inspection will teach them, yet would not trade for all the architectural treatises and drawings one moment of Attic light on the golden-brown of its walls and columns.

At the time I thought that I must be mad, to ride those distances with their hardships and discomforts only to look around me for a casual hour at stones whose reproductions are in our American museums. But one never knows. Stumbling

and sweating, I saw little: returned to the village, I could even ask myself whether I had noted anything at all. And yet from all my journey memory has since singled out for its most special pleasure that idle glimpse at the jungle-smothered hillside above the wild and muddy river, with its idols, its overgrown walls, and its vanished courts.

\* \* \* \* \*

My failure to bring Colorada across the river forced me to return to the lonely ranch for another night. At dusk Don Quixote rode in, spectral as before. He showed no surprise at seeing me; but inquired if I had any English books, as he would like to learn the language. He seemed disappointed at my negative, though he must have known that, in the land where he would shortly go to dwell, there is no need for learning of other tongues.

I had brought the women a fine pineapple from Copan. It was my only recompense for their hospitality, as they again refused my offers of payment the next morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the way back to the deceptive ford which had cost me such a wetting three days before, a couple of brilliant red and green macaws flew overhead in the sunlight and there were flocks of the little green love-birds which are such common

household pets in this part of the land. They have a large yellowish saucer around each eye, and this, above a heavily bent and juridical beak, makes them look like the wisest judge that ever sat the bench. In captivity they become extremely affectionate, incline toward a hilarious gravity (if such a condition may exist), and are an unending nuisance about the house. Flying wild across a clearing, they are a brilliant and happy spectacle; for a parrot free is as different from a parrot caged as, let us say, a sea-going lobster from a salad *en mayonnaise*.

The river was in still higher flood, and there was nothing to do but to swim. To my surprise Colorada stepped in without remonstrance and off we swirled, both of us submerged to the chin. The current carried us down a little, but we made the other bank easily enough and waded up in the swift shallows to the proper exit. Riding in wet clothes is neither dangerous nor uncomfortable: true depression only sets in when the saddle-bags are opened for inspection. Besides, a wet saddle-cloth and saddle are not apt to be merciful to an animal's back. However, "God himself rescued you!" cried a native whom we met; and we had the pleasure of learning that we had been the only ones to cross the stream during the last two days.

Poor Colorada! The path must have climbed

nearly three thousand feet, for we toiled up to high barren ridges looking wide over familiar and unfamiliar valleys. Far below we could see Don Quixote's ranch and the valley of the Copan, before we turned into other watersheds, wild scrawny uplands full of thatched huts and impossible settlements. The descent was even more sudden, down and down into the dense vegetation once more, to rejoin the Copan where he broke through rocky gorges. There, shut in by hot unfertile hills, was a basin with two little towns that fronted each other less than a mile apart. Twins, they bore twin names, Camotan and Jocotan. In either one you wish that you were in the other.

In one of these I found shelter with a kindly and garrulous old couple, a veritable Philemon and Baucis in Spanish guise. . . .

"The twain the whole house are, and order and obey."

These made me truly welcome; the old man showed me a room, while the old woman in her out-of-door kitchen fell to cooking me a dinner. . . .

"Super omnia vultus  
Accessere boni, nec iners pauperque voluntas."

The old man and I were soon fast friends, and

I found myself trying to explain why I rode the country on mule-back, alone and unarmed; but I could convince neither him nor myself, for the problem was really too difficult.

My wet accoutrements were hung up to dry, the old man insisting that I should not think of departing on the morrow. He promised to help me to sell Colorada, and himself led her down to the stream at dusk to water and tied her up for the night. His ordinary kindnesses shone in that land of indifference like the candle and the good deed in this naughty world.

I went to bed and dreamed that I was no longer in Guatemala.

In the morning the dear old nuisance caught me at my shaving and was at once lost in rapturous admiration of my safety-razor (which he called a shaving-machine). Like a child he begged and teased me until I gave in. With a round ball of soap and a crumpled handful of string he converted his face to that of a circus-clown. Though he got soap into his eyes and both soap and string into his mouth, I pronounced the lather a huge success. He settled himself in a wooden chair, blew out his cheeks, and announced that I could begin. Was it my professional ineptitude, or the dullness of my razor, or the length of his beard, or did I merely imagine those sounds of

rending and scraping that attended on my art? He swore that it was the height of luxury and comfort and that the machine was almost worth its fabulous price of two hundred dollars (Guatemalan). It was a day in his life, a memory for all time.

Within ten minutes fourteen neighbors had heard the details from his lips; and this so increased his prestige that he came to see that mere thanks were an inadequate return for my service. His eye travelled in perplexity around his paltry shop. I guessed that he was trying to find me a present; but I did not speak in time.

With smiles that almost turned to foolish tears, he begged me to be the owner of his pet, his own little green love-bird that climbed so prettily about the chairs and tables and sat on his wife's shoulder while she stirred the bean-pot.

"But what shall I do with him?" said I.

"Ride with him on your shoulder," he answered. "He will sit there all the way back to the States. And always you will think of me."

For a time I feared that he was right; but in the end there was no offence, and the love-bird lived on in Jocotan.

And here, in that same town, comedy turned to tragedy; for I sold my Colorada for a handful of silver and stood by while another man rode

her away to an upland farm. With that she goes out of my story, a little older and sadder than she entered, with close on a thousand miles to the credit of her grey legs. I taught her a little about river-crossings, while she taught me the hundred and one things that only a mountain-mule knows. I hope that she found a less energetic master than I (a more indulgent one never rode the Guatemalan trails). And with that wish, in simple decency, I must mark her memory by ending the chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE LOWLANDS

COLORADA was made over by deed and oath to her new master, and I was left with the remnants of equipage and the prospect of thirty miles on foot. I was content to wait for night and the moon before starting; but while I talked to the small boys of the village and kicked my heels in front of my lodgings, the good lady of the house, having eaten a green orange and some rancid butter without due interval or reflection, was suddenly convulsed with colic. The miserable creature died hourly through all that afternoon and evening and made a losing hazard out of my attempts at sleep. At midnight my equally wakeful host, seeing me prepared to go, brewed me coffee while he reviled his consort for her perverse failure to recover. He accompanied me a step upon my way, past the moonlit square and the sleeping soldiers, whom he seemed anxious to avoid. At the edge of the village he begged me to wait for daylight.

"Stay and sleep," said he. "There are evil folk on the roads at night."

"But I am more evil still," said I; and on the instant felt like a hare in full armour which I once had seen in a Japanese picture.

The timid old man was somewhat re-assured and sent me off with his blessing. My last wish was for his wife's recovery. "Oh," said he, "she will not die: she never does." And with that we parted.

By dawn I was high up in the hills, above a gorge through which my muddy enemy, the Copan, foamed and roared. It seemed not unlike the South of France with its limestone clefts and chasms and restless rivers. But better light destroyed the resemblance. I saw towers and roofs in the distance, my only glimpse of that Chiquimula where the Spaniards had once built a great church. It is now a great ruin and may well be worth a visit. But my path turned away on a long descent to the burning plain of Zacapa; and there I walked in the sun for a couple of hours between great twisted growth of cactus and prickly-pear which almost alone grow in that curiously arid stretch. In the midst of an otherwise prodigal fertility the river-valley of Zacapa is bad-land. The giant cactus, erect and fantastic-armed, grows to a thirty-foot tree (if such a

malevolent and leafless demon may be allowed that shadowy and comfortable name). The opuntia spreads out its thorny elephant-ears, from which (like a travesty of Athena's birth) spring new ears fully armed. There is no body,—only a chain of ears with a waxy yellow flower which runs a gamut of sunset colours as it goes to fruit. Between them, *Cereus* and *Opuntia* cover the bare soil with long fleshy fingers pulled out heavenward and lop-eared monsters of unpleasant green. But between the ranks of this mediæval purgatory ran the railway, and in the heart of the heat was the town of Zacapa with its American hotel. A civilisation of iced drinks and screened doors and spring-beds closed in about me, and I was at rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

The river was an old friend. It was the Motagua, which weeks earlier I had seen as a little stream trickling through the barrancas of Quiche. It had come down through a hundred and twenty miles of hill-country and was now the great river of Guatemala in an alluvial plain ten miles wide. Below Zacapa it leaves this arid expanse in rapids that break through rocky barriers and descend to a level valley-floor. Here on one side are the border-mountains of Honduras, on the other is the long spur of the range where the ancient races dug their silver and gold.

All between is damp lowland, heavily flooded in the time of greatest rain where vast tangles of sun-obscuring forest-growth are rapidly being converted into a sea of banana-trees.

At Quirigua Station there is now no jungle to be seen. Instead, a smooth sloping lawn, a hospital, a hotel, and endless banana plantations show what the self-interested benevolence of an American fruit company has done to open and improve the country. Improvement, however, has an economic rather than scenic application; for a banana farm is a dull affair. The palm-like leaves are always torn to ribbons and these have a pleasant motion in the breeze; but there is no real beauty of shadow or foliage, and the feeling of heat is indissociable from the vast damp stretches of evenly planted stems. To clear the jungle and set bananas is like ploughing ruined gardens to raise wheat. The railway-traveller may judge of this. Some ten miles below Quirigua there is a fine stretch of jungle which the banana interests have not yet managed to buy. There the vast palms and fern-trees still stretch up their leaves, the ceibas rise to their hundred-and-fifty foot greatness, bearded with Spanish moss. There is hanging bread-fruit; and one may see that strange tree, the matapalo, whose base is a wigwam of edged roots ending below in



webbed feet and merging above to the giant trunk. When young, this tree grows around some other for support, and in the end strangles it to death. The great branches are loaded with tree-orchids in full flower or cabled with "monkey-swings," fifty-foot vine-stalks that descend like stays to the damp soil (from which they draw moisture in such quantities that, if they are cut, they gush with clear and abundant water). Yet it is not only the strangeness and variety of the detail which impresses. There is always in the tropical forest a sense of something invisible just beyond, a daylight compacted of shadow, a dark silence which works on the senses as though it were portentous of something unimaginable about to be encountered. And all this has vanished from Quirigua, and the monotony of the plantation has taken its place. Monotony there is indeed. The straight tracks of the little railways lead on interminably, since every spot is precisely like every other. It is a realization of Alice's looking-glass adventure. Walk or run as you will, you are still in the selfsame place. In the heat of noon the feeling of oppressive monotony is intensified. From the hotel verandah the drowsy eye looks across the river-plain to the thunder-clouds that are balled on the high blue ridges of Honduras. Elsewhere the sky is clear, an intense blue through

which the sunlight descends and in which the buzzards soar and circle, hour after hour, without beat of wing. There is no wind, no noise, only all-penetrating noonday heat. The foreground is a crude light-green of banana-plants. Two miles distant, rises the dark green of a single grove. This alone the fruit company has spared, for here are hidden the most famous Indian ruins in the land.

They have been so well pictured and described,<sup>1</sup> their replicas are to be found in so many northern museums, that there is here no reason for detailed account or illustration. But I may still be permitted a few impressions and opinions of these, the most interesting ruins that I saw.

The site has been thoroughly cleared of trees and undergrowth, which has increased its accessibility and visibility, but rather impaired its picturesqueness. No doubt it is captious to complain. The grove has all sprung up since the temples were built and the obelisks erected; in fact it is the prying strength of vegetation that has been the main instrument of destruction. Not the hands of succeeding savage races, but the

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: J. L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. 1840. Vol. II.

A. C. & A. P. Maudslay, *A Glimpse at Guatemala*. 1899. (Sumptuously illustrated.) pp. 146-151.  
*Art & Archaeology*, 1916. pp. 269-290.

roots and branches of the jungle have forced the stones from their places and overthrown the heavy walls. Once there was a village round about. But houses with walls of split bamboo and roofs of palm-leaf thatch are the least enduring of human habitations. Within a year after their destruction the jungle must have come in. For all that, the jungle now belongs to Quirigua as the Turkish minarets belong to Saint Sophia, and I am as sorry that the ruins stand in clearings as I am glad that around those clearings the great trees are still allowed to stand.

From the endless world of bananas the visitor enters the sacred grove and comes to a clearing with five obelisks. They are of uneven height, but all alike are carved with strangely complicated figures of priests or kings, standing erect, and all have, on their shorter sides, square panels of picture-writing.

A quarter of a mile further on are the ruins of a considerable group of buildings, part excavated, part mere mounds of tropic vegetation. Here in 1912 an American expedition brought to light and partially restored an ancient temple, whose seven chambers lie deep in massive walls. Nearby in a plaza are idols, among them the Great Turtle.

The obelisks of the priest-kings are monoliths of reddish brown sandstone tinged with faint

purple. The stone was seemingly quarried in the foothills beyond the floor of the river-valley and floated to its destination when the Motagua was in flood. The largest are 25 and 26 feet in height. The kings in consequence are greatly more than life-size, though their great stature is much reduced by the high plaque of ornament on which they stand and by the towering head-dress whose many stages wander off into vagaries of grinning heads, monsters, and branching feather-work.

The typical king has rather rude features, large almond-shaped eyes, a rather triangular and fleshy nose, lips widely parted to make an almond-shaped mouth, a pointed beard springing from the underside of the chin. The so-called Egyptian cast of this countenance is merely due to the inevitable conventions of an unemancipated art. The squatting priestess with the marvellously elaborate headdress, who is carved on the "Great Turtle," may as well be compared to a Korean idol. The elements of such a comparison are all of them merely the universal primitive conventions. Korean and Mayan art both fall victim to the instinct for frontal presentation and seek refuge from empty surfaces by geometric fillings.

On all the carvings at Quirigua there is a tumult of accessory design. Thus, the great turtle,

a solid stone of some twenty tons, has every inch of surface wrought with ornaments which irrelevantly include human profiles and run to harsh-angled scrolls without apparent import. Much patience shows that these scrolls are geometric conventionalisations of human or animal motives. Tree and flower designs seem to be absent. The trick of the art, then, is to make a geometric mosaic of carving from these discontinuous forms and to link them together by some pretence of a general scheme. Consequently, the dominant figure of priest or dragon ramifies into irrelevancies. Each subordinate part becomes a field for smaller independent designs, as when the royal boots become human masks in profile, or the nose of the great toad becomes a human head. And so the general plan wanders off into borrowings from demon and bird and snake, until every inch of surface is filled with these interlocking elements, and art has become a puzzle-picture.

There are, therefore, two striking (and I should say, disastrous) elements in this art: first, the trick of turning nature into a repertoire of angular conventionalisations of human, avian, and reptilian motives; secondly, the mania for making each organic part of a large design serve as a new field for wholly unrelated smaller designs, whose elements in turn are similarly at-

tacked and disintegrated. (The old art of the Scythian steppes of Russia shows this same tendency; the art of Greece would have none of it.)

It is perfectly just, therefore, to maintain that Mayan art gives us just the opposite of those qualities of formal synthesis and unity, of emotional expression in natural objects through significant line and mass, which are the elements of greatness in Greek and the best of modern European art.

Mayan sculpture, from this point of view, is at its weakest in large complicated subjects and at its best in isolated decorative elements, especially in those where the angular treatment is in place and expressive,—I mean, in the grotesque. Such is the manikin-rattle or sceptre in the hand of the priestess in the dragon's mouth; and such par excellence are the manikins of the larger panels of picture-writing on one of the obelisks. Here there is a truly amusing inventiveness in the tormented positions of the little human-limbed demon with his acrobatic agility so deftly rectangularised. Because there is the same naïve humor of interwoven line and delight in the affrightening, there is a certain resemblance to Chinese dragon-designs; but the comparison goes no further, because there is no counterpart to the

serious and unfantastic qualities of Chinese drawing.

These little panels (perhaps because they show the local art at its best) bring out two further characteristics of Mayan carving, which again seem artistically mistaken. These are, the substitution of an artificial complexity of line for the simple and flowing contours of natural forms, and the failure to distinguish the merely grotesque from the imaginatively significant.

Accordingly, I cannot rate Mayan art very high. But it has a great and absorbing interest which is largely independent of its æsthetic value. After all, it is what it is,—a strange and marvellous relic of a unique civilisation. I am confident that Quirigua will become a great place of pilgrimage. Seen in their setting the bizarre distortions of its art are only the more stimulating to the imagination which begins to play about altar and image and shrine in the jungle, carved and built and abandoned more than thirteen centuries ago.

Of the Quirigua architecture there is not sufficient to allow an estimate of its attainments. It is not mechanically interesting, as it seems to use neither columns nor arches, but depends on solid wall-faces. In the Quirigua temple there were seemingly two stages, the lower one plain with a

cornice-band of pictoglyphs, the upper a façade of patterned stones. This lower portion stands to-day, its wall-blocks relaid in cement and sheltered from the rain. The long box-like plan is clear and the pictoglyphic adornment of the threshold steps is preserved in place. In the hotel at Quirigua Station is a row of idol-heads, sombre or grotesque, which once ornamented the wall-spaces and glowered above the doorways. The picture-writing of the cornice records a date which has been synchronised with 540 A. D.

These pictoglyphs have a quaint geometry which is all their own. Of the 200 varieties, nearly a quarter are understood by the specialists, though all of these (unfortunately) are connected with phases of the Mayan calendar. The chronology is thus assured to us, and we read their records like one who should read our northern chronicles with a knowledge confined to numerals. I fear that the accomplishment is almost equivalent to ignorance, as far as the more human elements of history are concerned. However, this much is held to be established: that the royal obelisks range between 490 and 535 A. D. (they are supposed to show a steady degeneration in artistic power); that the temples were built and deserted in the sixth century when the Mayas fled northward into Yucatan, where their civilisation

continued until the fifteenth century; but that their ancient sites were never revisited by them. Quirigua therefore has been lost in the jungle for more than a millennium. Yet with the further excavation of the site and the complete decipherment of the writing, it may be that even so great a lapse of time has not sufficed to blot out the ancient temple-town from the understanding of mankind.

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Below Quirigua the railway continues to follow the Motagua toward the sea. Banana plantations alternate with short stretches of unclaimed thicket. In place of Indian villages of bamboo and thatch appear the settlements of the negroes who are employed on the plantations. They live in whitewashed wooden shanties, speak a highly comic variant of English, and hail from distant parts. Some have been imported from our own southern states. Many have come from Jamaica in the West Indies, and most of these would like to get back to that island where, as one informed me, there is for them "very glorious second-class living." But few of them have energy or ready money enough to realize this fitful dream of return. The lowland climate has taken the energy and the Chinese who keep the general stores have taken the ready money. So they work on, play

music, live in their shanties, and look after their wives. In a world of idleness how should they worry themselves for anything beyond?

The railway leaves the Motagua Valley and passes through almost sunless thickets to the head of the Gulf of Honduras. Here is Port Barrios, where I pray Heaven that only my enemies may ever have to live. Yet there are three large wooden hotels, food in plenty, and refuge against the mosquitoes, so that it would not be hard to imagine worse places. This is the terminus of the railway from Guatemala City, and here the passenger steamers arrive weekly from New Orleans and fortnightly from New York. There are a dock, a railway yard, and considerable intermittent activity; for here is the gateway of Guatemala.

The weird double line of negro huts blazed up in the middle of the night while I was in Barrios and a midnight spectacle of Inferno brought on a charred dawn with half of the village destroyed. But thatched huts are like tropical vegetation and grow up again in a couple of days. The negroes wore new hats and shoes, mysteriously acquired during the excitement, and there was a noticeable industry among the Singer sewing machines which infest every native community, as unexpected gowns were shaped from strangely plentiful cloth;

but all this subsided, and Barrios resumed its internautic dullness.

A few miles oceanward along the bay lies Livingston. Once it was the main Atlantic port, before the railway diverted every cargo. It is still the capital of its department, vested with official, though no longer commercial, importance. Here the governor lives, the court legislates, and the band plays. Of governor and judiciary I have nothing to record; but of Livingston as a musical centre I am better informed.

It was Sunday, a poor day for all pursuits and pastimes wherein precision of brain and hand are consequent. The negro who carried my pack from the landing was on the amusing side of that ragged line between week-day sobriety and Dominical hilarity. It was he who informed me that he played bass in the village band and that there was to be a concert that afternoon. I am a lover of music, yet I fear that I furthered her corruption, since by rewarding a porter I inebriated a musician. When I reached the village square an hour later, the band had taken their places, though their music-notes, seen through an alcoholic haze, swayed and quadrilled before their eyes and refused to settle quietly on the racks. But their leader, though a small man, was of greater capacity than they (I speak as

well of music as of brandy), oblivious to every thought but that of leadership. For him, the politely attentive and unsmiling audience was forgotten; he saw neither square nor village, but only his men. His face was set, and he gripped his wand frenetically. The men must play their notes.

For all of that, they did not. They played their neighbours', they invented, borrowed, and discovered notes such as I have never heard, till their faces swelled with the windy effort. The little leader stopped them time and again, to remonstrate, to argue, to exhort, and finally to begin afresh. The audience waited and listened, polite, unsmiling, unsurprised. At last, a more than usually outrageous *impasse* precipitated a long tirade against the wielder of the clarinet, who in turn became voluble, excited, and at last mutinous. He refused to go on, rose, and tried to leave. At the steps, the little leader pounced upon him from behind, seized his coat-collar, and manfully dragged him back.

"Jesus," said he, "sit down!"

Jesus sat.

"Take that pipe!"

Jesus sullenly raised the instrument.

"Now blow those notes, and blow them right!" said the leader; and the concert began again. I

watched Jesus. The stops moved nimbly under his fingers, but I could have sworn that no sound issued forth. The leader watched him, too, with occasional side-long glances of furious suspicion. Each time Jesus redoubled his pantomimic zeal. Meanwhile the drummer-boy fell asleep in the midst of the uproar, and the selection had to be stopped until he could be revived. The native audience was attentive, but unamused. For them it was only what it purported to be, the regular Sunday concert.

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At Livingston the Rio Dulce breaks through the shore headlands, to form the most beautiful river in Central America. A thirty-foot oil-burning flat-bottomed boat runs up-stream once a week, starting an hour before the dawn and finishing its run of more than a hundred miles at sunset. In those fourteen hours it makes one of the most interesting and beautiful of river journeys. At four in the morning we left the landing-stage. It was brilliant starlight. The dog-star burned above a waning moon, and both re-appeared reflected on the calm ocean with a brilliance that we of the North never see. For the dog-star can cast a shadow in those latitudes and the full moon floods the open country with a silver daylight. We ran inland, and soon the banks rose

up to shut out half of the fading starlight with straight walls of two and three hundred feet. By daylight, these walls are solid greenery, tree above tree, with that dense richness of shadow under sunlight which gives tropical forests their effect of richness allied to that of mid-Gothic tracery or heavy lace. But as I saw it first, it was all shadowy walls and starlit water, rare and mysterious, a blend of elfland with explorations of the tributaries of the Amazon. With a red sunrise streaming behind us we came out into a lake full of grassy islands and low-lying points and shores, which after an hour narrowed to a slow-running stream where occasional alligators submerged themselves at our approach. Some twenty-five miles from Livingston an old crumbled Spanish fort stood guard over a final bend of the river. Rounding the point, we came suddenly into a great inland lake whose further shores were mountains lost in haze, between whose lines the water ran sheer to the horizon like a glimpse of the open sea.

It was the Lake of Izabal, or Golfo Dulce, thirty miles long and twelve miles wide, with a lee shore so rough under the afternoon wind that the native boats dare not cross. Around it are the hills, rising inland to ridges 5000 feet high. Yet the

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effect is more akin to Neuchâtel than Geneva, for there are no peaks nor cliffs, but only low wooded shores; and the great hills conceal their height. The lake was windless in the bright sun, its surface so thickly pollen-streaked that it resembled the rich gold veining of some blue translucent stone which changed and complicated its marking as the swell of the boat disturbed it. Otherwise there was nothing to see, until a dozen silver-sided fish started leaping free, and once the brown back of an animal broke the water. This I took to be a sea-cow. There are also said to be tapirs in considerable number; but of these I saw none, perhaps because of their enviable accomplishment of crossing a lake by walking on the bottom, perhaps because there were none to see. Across the lake a couple of houses showed where the village of Izabal stood. In Spanish times and even until the railroad was built, this was the main Atlantic port of the country. The sailing boats were warped up the long windings of the river to the lake and so came to their inland destination, which was rich enough in ships and cargo to tempt the pirate ships to their destruction beneath the guns of San Felipe, the Spanish fort whose ruins I had seen. It is all desolate country now and almost uninhabited.

But it was here that Cortes passed in 1525 on that marvellous journey to Honduras when he built bridges through miles of jungle-swamp, with his horses floundering to their very ears.

He tells his adventures simply and well in his fifth letter to the Emperor Charles V. He seems to have treated the natives kindly, though he speaks indifferently of burning an Indian for a moral offence. The simple folk mistook his compass for a magic mirror and hesitated to conspire against him. At Peten he was obliged to leave behind him a horse with a bad splinter in its foot. He recommended the animal so strongly to his native host that the simple Indian, in careful veneration of so marvellous an animal, offered it the choicest birds and flowers for food. The poor beast was thankless and died. Later Spaniards found a carved image of it among the local gods; but this was subsequently lost overboard while it was being transported. To this day the natives tell of Cortes and claim that on still days they catch a glimpse of this statue at the bottom of the lake.

Around the Lago Dulce in Guatemala Cortes was unfortunate enough to meet with armed opposition and had in consequence a sorry time in his attempts to wrest food from the scattered In-

dians of the almost pathless jungle. The modern traveller has still a little of the same struggle, just enough to let him admire the hardness of that great man.

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When our little steamer reached the head of the lake, it entered a muddy estuary between banks of willows and marsh-grass. The stream was narrow, but proved to be only one of many mouths; for the delta of the Polochic is as many-branched as Solomon's famous candlestick. After the partings of the stream were passed, the river proved to be of great size, winding swiftly through endless twists and turns. The journey is both fascinating and monotonous. At times the jungle-trees hang over the muddy water; in other parts the banks are sandy flats lined with tall plumed grasses and palms. But everywhere the waterfront has a wonderful variety of lights and shadows, of great trees and leafy undergrowth, through which the eye cannot peer. Behind its screen in the great green thicket the parrots screech and chatter and an occasional black baboon barks. Now and then a pair of long-tailed macaws fly up and across the stream. If the sun falls right, their dark silhouettes suddenly turn to a brilliant burst of vermilion and green,

gorgeous and unforgettable. Like Wordsworth's daffodils, long afterward they flash upon that inward eye "which is the bliss of solitude":

"I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought."

It was to such scenes and down this very river that Cortes floated on his rude rafts four hundred years ago. At a swift hairpin bend he was swirled into the bank, to be showered with arrows by the ambushed Indians who well knew this trick of the wild current. Now, Captain Evans, godfather of the Polochic, used to run a Mississippi paddle-wheel on this river, and one time he ran it hard aground on one of these turns. "Evans' Bend" said he laughingly, as we passed the spot. But I wager that Cortes had named and cursed it before him.

In the dry season the river runs between sand bars and muddy flats that make navigation difficult and supply sun-parlours for the unnumbered populace of alligators. But during the time of rains the muddy water stretches unbroken from bank to bank and the alligators sleep in the grasses or lie at the bottom of the stream.

As the boat passes, kingfishers fly scoldingly from snag to snag, alligators put their heads under water, the turtles scuttle to the bottom, the

herons and bitterns start up. At one point we roused a flock of those white herons whose existence the aigrette hunters once so endangered. Instead of rising above the trees and eluding us, they flew before us mile after mile along the stream, always vanishing around a bend of the river, to be startled from their perch as we rounded in pursuit. At another place a large turtle regarded us with an air of profound astonishment, while two butterflies settled themselves peaceably upon his Semitic countenance. Such are the sights of this journey; and of these there is prodigal profusion. Yet gradually a sense of monotony settles down, and by sunset one is well persuaded never to journey up the Amazon. A thousand miles of tropical river must be the highroad to desperation or insanity.

As the stream winds through the flat-lying plain between the screens of jungle-growth, there are glimpses of the high mountain-ranges which frame the river-valley. Their forests stretch to the very crests where the cloud-banks begin, with their shining white and tumbled masses towering up into the blue and sunny sky. Straight overhead it is clear, and the sun glitters more and more on the muddy stream as the afternoon passes. At last the larger trees begin to throw their shadows on the water, till finally the sun

sinks behind them and the cool of evening comes suddenly over everything.

At the day's decline we rounded a bend and found a dock and a railroad shed, for assurance that nearby there was a village in which to pass the night.

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Panzos is in the department of Alta Verapaz. This is a fact of administrative topography. Yet it is easily recognizable without recourse to the map. For the village is clean and tidy and there is a general air of self-respect which distinguishes the natives of this region. The women are often handsome and well-formed; the men are less like cattle and more like free beings. It would need an ethnologist to decide whether these differences are due to the German and Spanish infusion or whether the original Indians were really a different stock; but that is a quarrel about causes, and, in any case, the present result is plain.

Verapaz is undeservedly one of the less known regions of the country. Nowhere else are the customs of the Indians so varied, their temper so kindly, their villages so profuse. They are among the few natives whose artistic industries are of real interest. Their painted and carved bowls have the New-World character of the vanished art of the old Central American races.

Without being alike, they are almost inexplicably reminiscent. It is like a haunting flavour that the tongue never fully tastes, this common quality which makes their art American.

Panzos, however, is still in the damp lowlands, mosquito-infested, malaria-doomed. There is clear running water in the little plaza, with its garrison-room for the handful of native soldiers and its church where the sacristan's piety runs to discordant jangling of bells and explosion of powder in old iron pipes (to the detriment of nerves and slumber). But the daily holiday and the ceaseless fountain are only a mask of gayety and health. The Indians, brought down from the uplands, die of fever. Of the population of thirty years ago only one remains to-day. To be sure, the natives have children aplenty; but in the end only the race of mosquitoes really prospers in Panzos.

This is the end of river navigation and from here a little railway runs for twenty-eight miles up to the region of firm soil and dry roads where the ox-carts can bring down the coffee from the upland plantations. For this is a great coffee district, and the Alta Verapaz crop is held to be of the finest in the world. The plants grow into veritable trees (though their yield is not so abundant as that of the bushes of the Pacific

slope). Owing to the great rainfall, the plantations are always on hill-sides, so that the water may drain from the sloping soil. With all this humidity, the growth is prodigious. But weeds are more fertile than coffee, and constant hoeing is essential. This loosens the soil, which the heavy rains wash away. Perhaps because of this constant loss of humus, the plantations are not long-lived and re-planting is necessary before twenty years are up. Coffee, which many of us imagine to be indigenous and immemorial, or at least to date from Spanish times, has been growing in the land for only fifty years. It would be interesting to know whether it will last many centuries or whether the soil will deteriorate until Coban coffee loses its golden reputation. Amid so much rainfall and washing-away of the soil, neither the olive nor vine could flourish; and so it was that, until coffee was introduced, there was little but the scattered corn-patches of the Indians where now the great plantations cover the hill-sides. The foreign coffee-planters have grown rich, while the native is just where he was.

The little railway, leaving Panzos, runs inland through the jungle, the journey for the most part being a dull passage through disorderly undergrowth. There are occasional great trees, some hung with the baskets of the yellow-tails, whose

colony is reminiscent of a Christmas tree loaded with sugar-plums. The damp heat is intense and the air vicious with mosquito-swarms. But after twenty-five miles the ground becomes firmer, the rocky hills close in, and the train climbs through a fine canyon with overhanging walls, white waterfalls, and marvellous trees. The Polochic is now a mere stream running in the foam of rapids. Beyond the canyon the country is clearly upland in character: the jungle has vanished as if by magic, locked out by the walls of the defile through which the train has come. Here the railway ends, near the village of Pancajche. Beyond are the wooded hills through which the road ascends to the coffee-lands and the town of Coban in its upland basin. At the time of my visit the ox-carts had been almost a month on a road which is barely seventy miles in length, but unimaginable in its mud. It may have been here that the classic traveller was found sunken to his shoulders in mire, who, on being extricated with difficulty, thankfully advised his rescuers that if they were interested in a fine mule they would find one eight feet deeper.

From Coban one can ride northward in steep descent to the huge unpeopled lowland province of Peten. But of this vast lowland department I can tell you nothing. Impassable in the rainy

season, sparsely settled with Indian hamlets in the midst of swamp and jungle, it is full of the remnants of the ancient Mayas. It is to this region that present-day archæological exploration is directed; and perhaps those who have more knowledge and a better will can tell you something of this wild and unpleasant land.

From Coban it is only a four-days' ride southward to Guatemala City, at first through beautiful mountain country. From a ridge there is a view into a great upland cup, in whose centre shine the red roofs of Salama. Its enclosing hills are the celebrated "terraced mountains," which ascend in even and well-defined earth-steps, as though ancient races had put them under cultivation. Yet the phenomenon is undoubtedly natural, and no hands have ever been at work except those of the wind and the rain. There is here no parallel for the Incas' laborious and marvellous husbandry.

From the basin of Salama the rock-road makes a long descent to the crossing of the Motagua; and from this point begin familiar scenes. Here the highlands commence once more. It is the old story: the saddle at daybreak, a long day's trail, tortillas and black beans, Indians with their packs, upland views and wooded gorges, and at sunset the far-stretched plain of the capital city with the

great volcanoes black against the flame-red sky.

After more than a thousand miles of trail, I end where I began. I have done what I could to recount the sights and follies of that curious circle; and I finish without regret. But for you who have journeyed through this book I feel a touch of something that may be envy. For (I warn you well!) you, and not I, have discovered the truly enjoyable way of travelling Guatemala. But if in spite of that, on laying down this book, you think not over-kindly of one who has lured you so long and so far through such an uncivilised land, let your last thought be not of me, but of her who journeyed diligently and without complaint, Colorada, my grey she-mule of the mountains.



